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Oral history interview with Victoria Barr,
1977 January 11-February 18

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Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Victoria Barr on 1977 January 11-February 18. The interview took place in Barr's studio in New York, NY, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It is the 11th of January 1977. It is Paul Cummings to Victoria Barr in his studio on 14th Street in New York City.

I discovered you were born in 1937, but I couldn't find out in what city. So, could you start at the beginning?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I was born in 1937 in New York City.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah. So you were born in New York?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where were your parents living then?

VICTORIA BARR: On Beekman Place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On Beekman Place?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before they—

VICTORIA BARR: Moved to 96th Street.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —moved to 96th Street.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you live there for a long time?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I didn't. And I don't know how long they lived there before I was born. But I think that we moved to 96th Street when I was two.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you were two?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that you really grew up on 96th Street and not anyplace else.

VICTORIA BARR: No, not anyplace else in New York, except that we spent many summers in Greensboro, Vermont.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And I went away to camp a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of camp?

VICTORIA BARR: A rather ordinary camp in Cape Cod first, then in Vermont. Then when I was 11 and again when I was 13, I went to a very spectacular camp in Colorado called Perry-Mansfield, which was basically a theater camp, where I got very interested in set design and lighting design and really fell in love with the theater at that particular time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get to those two?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I tell you. When I had been—when I was living in New York, I did a lot of things the way New York children do. One of the things that I did was I went to a theater school called King-Coit, which was a terrific place. We were very inspired, as I remember it. It was a very inspired place. And that was my sort of first contact with the theater.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how old were you, roughly?

VICTORIA BARR: I haven't been able to figure that one out, but I think maybe about nine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so you were in grammar school, a student, approaching high school?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. But not—I mean, I was nine. I mean, it wasn't like I was 13.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So that I was at the end of my childhood. And at King-Coit they were going to do a production of *The Tempest*, in which I was going to act, although I don't remember what part. But there was also a whole section of painting at King-Coit. I did a lot of paintings, which I feel that I am still influenced by now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean painting and not theme painting, regular painting then?

VICTORIA BARR: Regular painting, yes, where I painted, you know, the characters from *The Tempest*, like Miranda and Trinculo. And that whole play influenced me very, very strongly, not only in terms of the paintings that I made at that time, but also to the extent that I think it's one of the reasons that I went to Bali, one of the very first reasons, even though I know that *The Tempest* takes place in the Mediterranean. But the idea of this, you know, sort of mysterious group of people on an island and all sorts of mysterious happenings, I think lodged in my imagination very strongly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Well, so we have jumped nine years already. What kind of a grammar school did you start? Do you remember?

VICTORIA BARR: I'll give you a list of the schools I went to.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Brace yourself. The first school that I went to—I mean King-Coit was not a school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was an after-school activity, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, right, right. I started out at a French kindergarten which may or may not have been attached to the Lycee. And it was in the neighborhood, which leads me to believe that it might have been, although not the same building. Then after that I went to Fieldston. After that I went to Dalton. After that I went to Brearley. After that, in high school, I went to Milton Academy in Milton, Mass. Then I went to Radcliffe for a year, that would be '55-'56. Parsons for a year. Then I went to Yale Art School for four years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm, you didn't miss anything.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Checkers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What intrigues me is, why all those schools? I mean, as a child, for example, why so many different?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I don't know about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It must have just happened that way.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it did. It made my education very complicated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I loved Fieldston and I rather liked Milton. The thing that I liked best about Milton was that by that time I had just come from my second summer at Perry-Mansfield. I plunged right into a lot of theatrical stuff that was going on at Milton. And there was somebody there that I found that I could work with, so to speak. Her name was Mrs. Ellery Sedgwick. She was a Boston Sedgwick. All through my years at Milton, I designed sets. Even when I was at Radcliffe, I did lots and lots of theater.

I mean, that was sort of the sort of—more than painting that was what really occupied me and, ultimately, I could say, got me through my adolescence. I was always much more interested in all these out-of-school things than I was in the more conventional schooling that I had.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, had you started drawing as a child?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I drew and painted also.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Starting about when, would you think?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pre-grammar school, grammar?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pre-grammar school?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah, yeah. And I did a lot of it. I also made sort of cut-out puppets, although I never put on plays or anything like that. I just liked the idea of having paper dolls that moved. I would make, you know, all the sort of joints so that they could move and so that I could dress them. Then I made up a lot of games, too, because in the country, my cousins were playing games, you know, like checkers and chess.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And the country is?

VICTORIA BARR: In Greensboro, Vermont, where we spent a lot of the summers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Greensboro. That was somebody's house, wasn't it?

VICTORIA BARR: That was a kind of—I hate to use this word, because it's so—it's a little overblown. But it was like a compound of houses, which actually my mother used to call a campus.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: What it was was there was the big house. This was a house that my father designed for his parents and was, as I remember it, a handsome wooden house, shingled, with a big slate fireplace and slanted roofs, because it snowed a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. And then near—there were beautiful porches on either side with wide railings where you could sit. A lot of activities took place out on the porches.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The summer entertainment.

VICTORIA BARR: The summer—yes, exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then down below in the sort of stand of pine trees, there was my father's father's study. Then I lived with my parents in a house nearby, a more cottage-like house, but basically the same idea. It was a slanted roof, the shingles, the fireplace. And then eventually, my parents built a subsidiary building, which was my father's study. So there were these four houses, and lots of hilly land with cedar trees. Then we had access to a lake, which was called Caspian Lake because it looked like—

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: —the same shape as the Caspian Sea. It was just so stupid to call it that. But anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

VICTORIA BARR: It was very beautiful, very northern, same kind of light as Montreal. And the summers were quite beautiful. They were cold in June, cold again in September.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Short.

VICTORIA BARR: Short. Rained too much. That was one problem, which used to get to me. You know, three days straight of rain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. What do you mean when you say your father's study. Your grandfather's study?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, these two buildings, these two sort of subsidiary buildings were—my grandfather, I never knew my grandfather. That's my father's father. But he was a Presbyterian minister. Evidently, he used to go and work in this separate building. Then when he died, it remained a study for awhile and then got converted into a house for my two older cousins, who were around my age. That's Tony and Elsa.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who are they now, Tony and Elsa who?

VICTORIA BARR: Elsa Williams now lives in Washington and has a family. Used to live in Amsterdam for years. Her husband works in the computer industry. Tony, who lives in Grosse Pointe and is six months older than I am just got married last spring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: His name is what?

VICTORIA BARR: Tony Barr, Andrew Barr. He's Andrew Wilson Barr, Andrew W. Barr. And he's in—he works for—he's in some kind of business concerning accounting. He may work for Price Waterhouse, actually, which is what my uncle used to work for. But I'm not sure about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that they were the only close cousin types that you had?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, they were. Then I had two younger cousins, who seemed always much younger. You know how it is when you're a child. Now they are totally grown up. And I saw them again for the first time in years when my cousin Tony got married last spring. We had a lot of catching up to do.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: One of them lives in Durango. That's Kathy Barr. And she's a—very strongly into the women's movement and works as a certain kind of specialized kind of map-making person for a certain kind of land survey that's going on in Durango. But it has to do with trying to develop the land with ecological intelligence, really, so that it doesn't get developed and all the land is used up badly and all the resources and stuff like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And Mary is married and lives in Acton, Massachusetts. She's married to somebody called Carl, and I can't remember his last name offhand. So those are my cousins. But Kathy and Mary, when we were growing up and I knew them only in Greensboro, because they all lived in Detroit, they were really so much younger that they had a separate life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, drawing as a child, how did your parents react? What did they think of you? I mean, all children draw. But you persisted and then somehow got interested into the theater, which we'll go into.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where you were using it.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, they reacted favorably. Particularly my father was very interested in what I was doing. And I did a lot. I spent a tremendous amount of time alone when I was a child, particularly in New York. I was very busy doing all of that. At one time—I'll tell you another thing that I did of out-of-school school, was I went and did a lot of painting at the school at the Museum of Modern Art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: With who? Tell me his name.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Victor D'Amico

VICTORIA BARR: Victor D'Amico. That was a very active period for me, too. I loved it. Big, those, you know, great cans of poster paint, jars. I can still remember the smell of the blue, the ultra-marine blue had a very special smell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, anyway, I was busy there, too. I loved it. It was very natural for me. And I mean, when I was a child I didn't have any particular ambitions. I only started getting really sort of ambitious when I was about 13.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. You got old, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I got old at 13 and started to get ambitious.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I mean it was just a very natural experience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about all the different schools? Didn't that affect your friends?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, every school meant a whole starting all over with a new set of people.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that mean anything to you? Or did you like that?

VICTORIA BARR: I think I was fairly uprooted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I hated leaving Fieldston. I was very happy there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you there?

VICTORIA BARR: Let's say I was there from kindergarten through third grade. Then I went to Dalton. The one experience at Dalton which was fantastic was, did more painting, had my first solo show at Dalton in the downstairs section of the school when you first came in. And there was a marvelous woman there whom I loved called Gwen Davies. And again, I had very—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know what she did for all those years.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, yes, she taught at Dalton for years and years and years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I didn't know that.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah. She was terrific. We really—oh, we loved her. [Inaudible.] the kids, no, no. She was a very loving person.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I did one painting there that I just was thinking about again. I mean, I talk about—I talk about this now as my early work. Of course, I did not think about it then, necessarily, except I knew absolutely what a solo show was, except then it was called a one-man show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Still is.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow, I mean, I understood absolutely at age nine what a one-man show was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aha. You'd been influenced.

VICTORIA BARR: I knew. I knew a lot about the art world already. That was so great, though. That was really beautiful. I have very good memories about that. Didn't like the rest of the school, except for one person whose name was Seeger. And he was one of the brothers of Peter Seeger, the folk singer. He taught geography. On Friday afternoons at Dalton, when things were not so highly scheduled, he used to have a sort of storytelling time. He used to tell stories about kids traveling all over the world. I think that he was one of the earliest influences in terms of my sort of romance of traveling.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I mean I used to go all the time and just listen to him. And geography was one of the few subjects that sort of captured my imagination in school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there other subjects that interested you?

VICTORIA BARR: No, not really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

VICTORIA BARR: I wish that—now I wish that—I took Latin for years. I wish that I had taken Greek. I was actually at Browning—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That would have been classical Greek, though, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I know, whereas the fact is that I would like to be able to speak demonic Greek. But I would have liked to have had a classical Greek background rather than Latin background because one of the best academic years that I ever had was at Brearley, where in the early years—and this would have been, say, fifth or sixth grade—they had study programs based on like, say, the—well, like the Greeks. Say, well, you studied the Greeks all year in history, did some literature, in English—quotes, "English."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I got very turned on by the Greeks and Greek myths. That made a profound impression on me. So, academically speaking, yes, that was one year where I was very, very taken. So that later, I mean, when I took all the Latin that I took, which was mostly at Milton, it didn't have the sort of substance of a civilization behind it that attracted me the way—I always felt the Greeks were better.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason?

VICTORIA BARR: They just were.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I guess somehow maybe it was—I think it was, you know, the great plays, the mythology. I can't say. These things are very intuitive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rome was too decadent.

VICTORIA BARR: Hm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rome was not strong enough?

VICTORIA BARR: No, no. No, I don't think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there other grammar school instructors that you remember?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. There was another teacher—oh, not grammar school, no. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like going to camp and then coming back to another school and then going to camp and going off to another school? I mean, how did you orient yourself?

VICTORIA BARR: I think it was very confusing. I don't think it was such a hot idea. But I can't really say anything else about it, actually.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What got you interested in the theater so early? Did you go? Were you taken by your parents to the theater?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I was. But I think that it—I mean, I was brought up on the New York City Ballet. This was before it became so popular. And it was possible to go without getting tickets in advance. I went, and went, and I was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who did you go with?

VICTORIA BARR: With my mother. It was beautiful, and I knew until about the age of 17 I could identify easily all the dancers, often without binoculars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they became people you, quote, "knew"?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: I had picture books in which I could look at them. Also, I went to a skating club in which at a certain point there was a big party every year. All the mothers made costumes, and it was like a skating competition, and it was a costumed competition. My mother, I think, was very taken with the ballet. She made me a beautiful costume that was modeled on a costume that Nijinsky wore. It was an 18th century conception of an Indian, Indian from India—an Indian prince. This was a really beautiful costume. It had a yellow turban, and it had one of those sort of Indian coats that come to just about the knee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The knees, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Which was in a sort of warm-ish red like the color of my sweater. But it seemed to have a little gold in it. And then there were pants that were like, you know, 18th century knickers that came to here that were sort of a contrasting pink. It was very, very elegant and beautiful.

My mother always used to talk about [Inaudible.], Nijinsky and Diaghilev and Venice and all of that sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Her whole Italian—

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit, yes. That was a cultural phenomenon that she was very involved in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The Ballet [Inaudible.] Carlisle. And you know, I knew about Nijinsky's leaps and all this stuff. But that's not really answering your question because my passion for the ballet did not really seem to have that much connection with my interest in making new set designs. That seemed to be a later moment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The set designs?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they were for what, plays?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As opposed to dance?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes, yes, right. No, I never sort of made that kind of alliance between designing sets for dancing. Although now, I would love to have one of my spirit and demon drawings blown up as a backdrop, a huge backdrop for a dance, you know, for ballet. I once asked Aladon Marburger [ph], who thought that he could connect me up with somebody to do something like that. But we never—you know, I never pursued it; he never pursued it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But dancing—I would say of all things that have influenced my painting most, aside from my own early work, was dance. I mean, I became—I wished—I mean I had that dream that a lot of little girls have of becoming a ballet dancer. I'm very glad that I didn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because I think it's an extremely tough life. And I don't think—I'm not coordinated enough to do it anyway, so—I mean I'm not very athletic. But I did do a lot of dancing later in my life. But mostly, my first big dancing, aside from all the dances that we had at Milton, [laughs] which were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does that mean?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, you know, they were—what they were were they were 1950s formals. But they were not the formals that we know as classic high school formals because Milton was so classy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So it was like sort of dance cards. It was awful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the whole thing, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it was just awful. But everybody got very, very dressed up, you know, strapless dresses and all of that. But the first dancing that really influenced me in a very profound way, actually, was, I learned how to waltz, how to do the Viennese waltz. And when I went to Radcliffe, I started to be invited to something in Boston called Waltz Evenings. I happened to be going out with somebody, whose name was Jim Harrison, who happened to know how to waltz—very unusual coincidence. There could have been maybe 15 men at Harvard at that time who knew how to waltz and loved to.

We used to go and waltz. We'd go out and have dinner at a wonderful restaurant in Boston. I can't remember what it was called. It was very fancy and very special. And we used to get to the Waltz Evenings. The moment they began we would arrive, when the room was completely empty; very unfashionably early.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where were they held?

VICTORIA BARR: They were held in the Copley Plaza.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: In the ballroom at the Copley Plaza—with the usual gilt chairs, you know, all up and down the ballroom and everything and tables down at one end. And we would start waltzing the minute the orchestra struck up. We waltzed right straight down the length of the ballroom. And we waltzed straight. We never sat down. We waltzed straight until there were so many people that we started bumping into people and injuring ourselves.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it was fantastic. It was really fantastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow! Marvelous.

VICTORIA BARR: It was extremely exciting. And I learned how—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a wild dance if you do it really well.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Yeah. It's a very wild dance and very elegant. You know, that sort of business of spinning very, very tight and going very, very straight, you know, that sort of double conception of motion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And last year when I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do all the dips and everything?

VICTORIA BARR: No, we didn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: No. We just went—we were very—you know, sort of very geometrical about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: The only thing we could do is, we could go in reverse, which I think kept us from spinning ourselves out of Trinity Church.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The dips are so marvelous, you know.

VICTORIA BARR: He was very classic, though, about how Viennese waltz should be done. He was going to be a musicologist so that he was very, very involved with music, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my heavens.

VICTORIA BARR: It was terrific. I wrote a very beautiful poem about it. I mean, I don't mean to sound—you know.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I wrote a very beautiful poem about waltzing last year. I did a little waltzing this New Year's again; liked it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's coming back.

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe it is.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, a little bit, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, it's interesting. You said you were rather alone as a child. But now your mother was teaching, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And your father was at the museum.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who took care of you during the day? Or did school coincide with when your mother was out so that when you came back or she went out—

VICTORIA BARR: Well, my mother used to get me off the school bus from Fieldston. And sometimes we used to go to the park or go shopping, you know, grocery shopping in the neighborhood. Then when I started to go to school in the city, I was taught how to cross the street, right, how to get to school. It's an interesting number for somebody who grows up in New York. It's mothers teaching their kids how to get across, you know, the street.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To look for the light and the cars and people.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. Turning cars, all that kind of stuff. Then there were people who stayed in a certain room in my parents' apartment. They were called Sleeping Beauties. And they were students from the Institute for—NYU Institute.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: They needed a place to live, and they needed to make some money so that when my parents were out, which they were—and they went out a great deal, there would always be somebody there, sort of living in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: I guess that they would give me dinner and, you know, we would play around or not playing around. Then they would go back and study, and I would go to bed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So again, there were ever-changing Sleeping Beauties.

VICTORIA BARR: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, goodness. So it sounds like you were terribly active.

VICTORIA BARR: It was very active. It was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did your parents entertain at home? Were there lots of sort of at-home things that you were involved with or barred from?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, they did quite a lot of entertaining at home. I would sometimes come out and say hello. No, I was not included that much in those early years. As entertaining was, they would—I have no very clear memory of this, actually. Sometimes they gave big parties. They—and sometimes—well, for instance, they gave eggnog parties, I believe on Christmas Day or New Year's Day. I guess it was New Year's Day, actually—that were sort of a traditional thing that I remember in my childhood.

And actually, just to get back to the waltzing, because this all ties in, the first sort of waltzing influence in my life was John McAndrew, who used to be in the Architecture Department at the Museum of Modern Art. Life was very exciting and very vivacious for all of them then. And John used to come over, and we would put on waltzing records. I have a vague recollection of this only, in which John would waltz me around the room and up over the

furniture.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But those were not—you know, those were not exactly—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Public events.

VICTORIA BARR: Public events, no. But there really was a lot of very public life going on all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I would certainly hear about it, and I would see my parents going out in evening clothes very, very often. But I was never very—I mean, after all, by the age of 14, by then I was already going away to school. So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. So that it was really an intermittent observation on your part. I mean their world.

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. It was, more or less, yes. I mean, I did go to—this is—I mean I did go to the Museum very often. I mean, beginning, I suppose, with simply going to my father's office to pick him up, and then the whole painting thing with D'Amico. Then I went to certain artists' studios when I was really a child. One of them being Alexander Calder. That's my first memory of an artist's studio. That's all I remember. I went to see Peter Blum. I think we also went to Sandy Calder's—I don't know where this studio was. But I think we also went to Sandy's in the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Connecticut. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Connecticut and New Jersey. Didn't he used to live in New Jersey? I don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was in Connecticut for so long. Blum has been in Connecticut for years and years and years.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it's all a little, you know, too remote for me to remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: These are real childhood memories, and they are not very clear.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But once you started going away to school, did you know what you wanted to do? Did you have any idea of study, of career, of activity?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I always knew what I wanted to do. Beginning at about—beginning at age 11, first I was going to be a set designer, and that was my prevailing thought until I was about 19. And then I also had a subsidiary interest. As I was very interested in traveling, I was also very interested in science. And it might have been that, if there had been such a thing as ecology, I might have turned out being an ecologist rather than a painter. But there wasn't. You know, all of this was sort of geography and biology and geology.

I got into this thing of rock collecting when I was an adolescent and did a long thing on Roxbury Conglomerate, which won a first prize in the Science Fair in Boston. But what happened in terms of the whole science thing was that the year that I was at Radcliffe, I did take a science course. I was also doing a lot of theater stuff when I was there. And I was really busy. I mean, I just—I was so busy that I didn't know the names of the buildings, the other buildings, the other dormitories at Radcliffe until the end of the year because I was so busy studying and then doing all this theater stuff.

I found that I really—I really preferred the theater stuff. Didn't do too well in that science course and that was the end of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the end of the science?

VICTORIA BARR: Of the whole science interest, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, you know, what happened in the theater that kept you immersed?

VICTORIA BARR: The excitement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The excitement of it?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: It was just incredibly exciting. And I loved working with other people. Of course, the thing—my situation was very good that way, because I felt—when I was at Radcliffe, I lucked out in terms of the energy that was being put into theater at that time. The thing that was so exciting about it was that there were no—the Loeb Theater had not been built yet. There was no institutionalization of the theater then. And in the spring of my freshman year, there were 21 theatrical productions put on in the college, none of them in a regular, really good theater. I mean, there was Sanders, but, you know, it was not—it didn't have that institutionalized feeling.

At that time, off-Broadway was going strong. It caught our imaginations. And Broadway was still very powerful. It was just wildly exciting and that's what I loved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what did you do in the various productions?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I was—I feel that—one of the things that happened to me was that I sort of brazened my way in to the Harvard Dramatic Club. I remember—oh, God. I remember this because I went for an interview. I'll never forget this. I mean, it's funny. I was intimidated then. I look back on it now, and I laugh. But I was really intimidated then because there was this guy called Woody Price who was interviewing all the freshmen to see, you know, whether they wanted to have any freshmen in the club. I'll never forget it. He said, "Have you had any professional experience?" And I said, "Yes."

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Because besides all of Milton and Perry-Mansfield, I had worked—when I was 16, I had worked for Chick Austin who used to be at Hartford and then he was down at Ringling Brothers. He had a summer stock theater in New Hampshire.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Oh, I didn't know that.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't remember. Somewhere in southern New Hampshire and I had worked with him. So I was able at the ripe old age of 17—18, of 18, to turn to this sort of smart-ass guy and say, "Yes, I have."

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: So anyway, I—what did I do? I stage-managed—first time I'd ever stage-managed—a production of *Macbeth*, in which Andre Gregory played Macbeth, who is still going strong in the theater, but hardly in the same way. And it was an immensely complicated production. I don't want to go into this in great detail. But I had an extremely fat notebook with all the cues, all the lighting cues and all the sound cues and everything in there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, it was fantastic. You really had to be right there all the time to give cues to all the people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I certainly would not like to be a stage manager now. But it was terrific then.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I learned a great deal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You keep the show on the road as the stage manager.

VICTORIA BARR: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was terrific. Then in the spring, I did—I worked on a production that I liked much more. I can't remember what it was called. It had beautiful music to it. And let's see if I can recall. The people who wrote it made a musical on Broadway, the book of which was written by Truman Capote. This was not—this was not that show though. But anyway, that I did in Lowell House, which was one of the Harvard houses, in the dining room, along, of course, with lots of other people. That was [Inaudible.]. That was really just marvelous.

The only problem with that kind of life is that—and I feel that this is true with anybody that works in the theater. That if you work in the theater, you really don't do anything else. I mean, I suppose, you know, that if it's unionized and it's Broadway, you may not work 24 hours a day. But if it's anything else. The idea of going to Radcliffe or to Harvard and doing all this theater on top of it is insane. It's not a life for anybody.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say that? I mean, so many people would do anything to do it.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, well, I mean, it's fantastic. I did anything to do it. But the fact is that you never sleep. And the studying becomes an incredible bore. It was boring! I mean, so boring compared to the theater. It was just a drag. It was something you had to get through. So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right. How did you pick Radcliffe to go to?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I tell you. I think I went because it was the best place to go and because my friends were going there. All the brainiest students at Milton went to Radcliffe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: And I did not think in those days that I would end up, one, as an artist—never—nor necessarily that I would go into the theater to the extent that I might have gone to Carnegie Tech, say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm, right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, I mean, I wasn't that clear in my mind. I wanted to go where my friends were going.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And that was a good place.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it was. It was terrific. It was extremely exciting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any instructors at Radcliffe that you remember particularly?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I knew some. I mean, I knew Sydney Freeberg, who was a friend of my parents. He was a friend. And I might have—I took a big general art history course at Radcliffe, and he might have taught a section of it; I don't know. The fact is that I knew Sydney long before I went to Radcliffe. And I liked him. He was a friend and other from that, no. Nobody made an impression on me. I was only there for a year, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was more interested in the theater than I was in my studies.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They didn't count.

VICTORIA BARR: No, they didn't. They might have later. I mean, you know, there were lots of very great teachers there. But I never made any contact with them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you have any studio courses—I mean painting or drawing—anywhere along the line up to Radcliffe?

VICTORIA BARR: Up to Radcliffe?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Milton, the art department was very weak. I used all that sort of creative energy and went right into making set designs for Milton, which I made constantly, from the very first semester that I was at Milton where, again, with great brazen, in the context of that age, just barely age 14, maybe 10 days into age 14. There was a theatrical thing going on. I don't know what it was. And I sort of appeared backstage, and somebody had gotten sick who was supposed to do the makeup. And Mrs. Sedgwick turned to me, and she said, "Have you ever done any makeup before?" Now, I was hot out of my second summer at Perry-Mansfield, and I said, "Yes," which was a blatant lie. I'd never touched any makeup in my life.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I knew how to build sets, but I'd never done that. So I did it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that's how my whole theater thing started at Milton. It went right on through till I graduated. I think I worked on almost every single production that they gave.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my heavens.

VICTORIA BARR: So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that whole theatrical experience and theater interest has affected you in painting or teaching?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In any way?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I do. Yes, I do, in a sense, in that I think that I'm interested or that I have a sense of the dramatic, for better or for worse. You know, I'm a little skeptical about it. But I think I have a sense of the sort of dramatic impact, necessary dramatic impact. I think that the stage managing, although certainly the least creative, has made me understand that I can get extremely organized and that I am able to—for instance, if I have somebody come and work for me in the studio, which in fact I do—very rarely, but every now and then, you know, I sort of have a siege—that I know how to tell people what to do and how to organize them to work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That comes right out of stage managing, you know, that I can get myself organized, that I can keep a lot of people working, and keep them organized in the process.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't go to the theater very much anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: I'm not very interested in watching performances, except for certain kinds of dancing. Otherwise, I'm not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of dancing?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, the dancing that I'm most interested in now, I don't see very much of in New York and don't like to, and that is either Indian dancing, and mostly Bharatnatayam, the dancing that originates around the Dras Bharatnatayam, and then Balinese dancing, where I have been—I was in Bali in the summer of '75 and '76 and spent most of the time there, when I wasn't just relaxing or thinking or contemplating, going to different villages to look at dances that were given in conjunction with temple festivals. So that's—but other from that, the whole thing about performance is becoming increasingly less interesting to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I often wonder why that is, because I rarely go to the theater anymore.

VICTORIA BARR: I feel very sad about it, as if—I mean, I used to go—I also love movies. I used to go to the movies constantly. I knew—you know, I knew about directors and I knew about the whole, you know, French influence, and the *Nouvelle Vague* and, you know, Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, and I followed them. And now it doesn't—I still go to Truffaut. I go to Godard, still. Eric Rohmer I like a lot. But I don't have—oh, Bogdanovich. I think is just terrific. Francis Ford Coppola, somewhat. Who directed *Taxi Driver*? Do you know? Anyway, I think that's a real brilliant movie. It's horrendous, but brilliant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Early Fellini. Movies were another great passion of mine, but no longer. I don't like to sit and watch people perform. I'd rather—my interest in performance has translated itself into my new interest in watching people move on the street. I've found this year—I went to see a Bharatnatayam performance in which I was quite bored. I came out—just it was in the Carnegie Recital Hall. And Carnegie Hall was just getting out at the same time. To see the people come out of Carnegie Hall, you know, that crowd sort of milling around, people on the street, and that was more of a performance, more fascinating for me than anything that I've seen in a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From what way, do you think?

VICTORIA BARR: I think it's because what has happened is that the whole dancing thing, which is like—well, let me just say two things. One, I've become more interested in listening to the way people talk, to hearing the quality of their voice and to the rhythm of conversations. And I had a chance to do that in the recent Pinter play with Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. But the dancing, after years of looking at dancing and then also dancing a great deal, not just waltzing, but the whole rock and roll thing and the Twist before that—I mean, I danced like a maniac for years—was that I began to see or I began to translate, to make a sort of sense out of reality in a translation of everybody doing their own dance, which means basically to me two things. On one level, it means everybody is living their own life, you know, their self-contained own life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But also, in terms of looking at people on the street, I have been able to sort of get myself into a certain frame of mind, at certain times when I'm not too distracted, where I can—I feel as if I'm a visitor on earth and I just see people moving. But even looking at cars, you know, they suddenly stop being my concept of cars and just become a constellation of movements, in which I also include the changes of lights, so that I see a bank of lights turning, you know, red, yellow, green. I see the cars moving and the people are walking and it's all like this sort of stately dance. So that when I see a performance, it looks like a performance, and it's not interesting to me anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What is so appealing in your own dancing? It was all about dancing and everything else. But what did you like about it?

VICTORIA BARR: It's fun. That's what I liked about it. It was really fun. Also, I found—like the time when I danced the most in my life, aside from the Waltz Evenings with Jim Harrison, was in Aspen. I lived in Aspen in 1961 to 1962. I mean, I lived there for a year-and-a-half straight. There were certain clubs where we went dancing. And as a resident, I was like a ski bum in that I would work along with the other resident skiers. Like they would be waiters or, you know, work in stores or ski instructors and everything. Then we'd all come out at night and dance afterwards, except, of course, a lot of people went to bed early because the skiing was so rigorous. But I loved the night life. Yale, where I had been in the previous four years, is very dreary. And you know, I was out there having a real good time.

We used to get off work at about 10:30 or 11:00 and go into town. We used to go to this marvelous, really sort of crummy place called Trader Ed's. There would be like half-an-hour of jukebox and half-an-hour of live band, and all Twist. And again, and with the same kind of thing that I did at the Waltz Evenings, I'd start dancing and just never stop. We'd start out with beer and then we'd switch to lemonade.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: We'd dance and dance. And it's like going into another state. The same thing is true of waltzing, you know, that you get to a point where you change. It's like changing your state, changing your state of mind. That's what I loved. It was so great. We'd dance. We'd sometimes dance almost straight until three in the morning. Then we'd go to another place called the Red Onion, and we'd have a huge breakfast. And then I would get up at nine o'clock and start painting. This was in Aspen. Get up at nine, feel fantastic. It was just great and so beautiful.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Just great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

VICTORIA BARR: It was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get to Aspen?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, when I graduated from Yale in 1961, I had been—I wanted to go out West again. I went out because there was a fly-by-night art school. I got a teaching fellowship. So that's how I landed in Aspen. The job did not work out. Then I got another wonderful job working in a store that belongs to somebody called Patricia Moore, who is still there and sort of like design research, but not so refined. Because she was such a good merchant that she could do everything, you know, from the best teak bowls in China right on down to things that would appeal to a different kind of taste. I mean, she really understood the people that bought there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I worked for her. I loved the West. And I loved the life there. It wasn't too developed yet, and a lot of the original Aspen people are still around. The guys that had been in the Ski Corridor in New York and who had gone to develop Aspen were still around then. Herbert and Joella Bayer, who were the sort of town aristocrats, and Pussy Paepcke. It was a transitional period then. It was wonderful. It was sort of the end, really, of—the end of that period where—then Aspen got very built up after that.

Of course, everybody already said that Aspen was built up in 1961–1962, but I wasn't there as a witness for the previous years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. So that more and more and more. Why did you not continue at Radcliffe?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I never thought that I wouldn't. I went to England that summer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In '56?

VICTORIA BARR: In '56 and stayed in Oxford with a family called Drysdale who ran a school for maladjusted children, which was called the Mulberry Bush School. They were intelligent and experimental.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find that?

VICTORIA BARR: Through my parents. My parents were working. My father was doing some kind of thing with Picasso. This had happened in previous summers with different families. When my parents went to Europe, sometimes they would take me for a short time, then I would go and live as a paying guest in a family. At this point, there was a—one of the children in the family, Sally Drysdale, was my age. And I will never forget it. One day I was on the bus and going between Oxford and this little town where the Mulberry Bush School was. And I suddenly thought to myself, "I don't have to go back to school."

I suppose it was, a preliminary drop-out urge in a sense, not entirely fulfilled because I didn't pack my, you know, backpack and head to India the way I might have done if I had been 10 years younger and done this in the '60s. But it was just—"God, I don't have to go back to school."

So what I did was, I was going to stay with this family for a year and then go back to Radcliffe the following year. That—I dropped out for a year. But I had every intention of going back. And I don't want to go into this in—what happened was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think provoked that, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Freedom.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was ecstatic!

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, after all those years of school, school, school, "I don't have to go back." That's what it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Escape.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, yes, life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Out into another world.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you spent how much time in England?

VICTORIA BARR: I forgot to put this on. We'll put it on now. I spent—well, what happened was it didn't work out because the Suez Crisis occurred. The idea was that Sally and I would commute to Oxford and be tutored.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: This seemed like a good idea. Learn how to write well, that was the conception behind that. Aside, you know, from life of—around a great British university and all that. All of a sudden, it seemed as if there wouldn't be any gas. There would be gasoline rationing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was quite a panic, actually. The tutor couldn't get to us and we couldn't get to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It wasn't going to work.

VICTORIA BARR: A half-an-hour's drive into Oxford. So it just wasn't going to work. And I didn't want to just sit around, you know, with the Drysdales. That was not the idea. I mean, something had to be done about my education still.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I felt that, too. So I came back to New York, couldn't get into Radcliffe because I had given up my place. That's how things worked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So anyway, I went to Parsons School of Design.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you pick Parsons?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, one of the feelings in my—or the considerations in my family was that after I got out of college I would have to support myself. And they felt and I felt that I didn't want to be a secretary. What to do, you know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There was always this thing going on of the fact that I was very visually oriented. And so, to give it a try, see what it was like to be a commercial artist so that I might have something to do when I left Radcliffe. I mean, who knows? You know, I might have gone through Radcliffe and decided to do something else, be an art historian and heaven knows what.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow, I just seemed—like there I was, back in New York in September. And it's hard to get into schools. You can't just get into any old school at the last minute.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At the last minute, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So anyhow, I went to Parsons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

[END REEL 1 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tape, side two. We have you at Parsons. What did you begin with? What kind of curriculum or what aim?

VICTORIA BARR: Went into graphics and advertising. And within five weeks, I knew that I'd never go back to Radcliffe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was just catnip. I really—I knew. I knew that I was so much more oriented in that direction that, no matter how great the education was and no matter how exciting the university was—and it was very exciting them for me, and I think was very exciting as I look back on it, in retrospect, in general, having subsequently been at Yale—I knew that I would never have that kind of academic life again. Didn't want it. It was just unsuitable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because I think that I felt that I knew what I was doing and that I liked it. You know, it made sense; it had meaning. And it was also exciting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did your parents think of your leaving the academic world for the commercial art scene?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I think that they were fairly open about it, because when I had thought of going to Radcliffe, they had wanted me to try and apply for Rhode Island School of Design. My thing about that was that I didn't know anybody there. You know how it is when you're around that age. And I was like this. You know, I wanted to go with the crowd. I wasn't ready to make that kind of break yet. Milton was not very visually

oriented.

What happened with me was that I—when I left Milton, I wasn't in a situation where I knew absolutely that I wanted to go into the theater, per se. So that if I had been, I might easily have ended up at Carnegie Tech, say. I knew that I had to continue with my schooling.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I wouldn't necessarily recommend that now for anybody else. But I think that the whole Bauhaus, the whole Bauhaus thing was in the back of my parents' mind so that, although God knows Parsons was not the Bauhaus.

PAUL CUMMINGS: True.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, I mean, actually, if I had been older, one of the things that I could have done that I wish I had done would have been to have gone to Black Mountain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I mean, that was just—you know, I was too young.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, also it was falling apart by that time.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. It was over with.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was almost over with.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. Of course, ultimately ending up at Yale, but I would have been at Black Mountain first.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And the Bauhaus.

VICTORIA BARR: And the Bauhaus, right. And of course, Herbert Bayer had also been at the Bauhaus.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious when you say that the Bauhaus was in the back of your parents' mind. What do you mean by that?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I think that they saw—you know, I mean, I never was a great—a great academic person. And I think that they wanted to get me into a situation where I could make my living doing something that was not—I mean, I don't know what—you know, my sort of professional destiny was very much on their minds in terms of making money, although not necessarily in the sense of, "Well, you know, maybe she should be a doctor" or, you know, a lawyer or something like that. I think I'd been, you know, sort of involved in the arts enough.

And yet at the same time I was very willful then, so that when I wanted to go to Radcliffe with the crowd, you know.

I also think that—I had lots of learning difficulties. I feel that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I had trouble spelling, and I had trouble articulating. I had trouble remembering. I think that it wasn't that I wasn't intelligent. It was that I sort of got off on the wrong foot in my education, and that there were no teachers who were intelligent enough to say to me, "It's not that you're not smart. It's that your attitude—your attitude about yourself is not in line with"—because all my friends, all my friends at Milton were the most intelligent people, you know. But the fact is that most schools are not visually oriented. It's all reading, writing, and arithmetic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true. Right. Absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: It's too bad.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they're afraid of us.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mostly, they're afraid of us.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it provokes reactions they can't program.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mathematics, you know what's going to happen.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Until you get to very fancy levels. But otherwise, you pretty well know what's going to happen.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, were there people at Hunter that interested you as far as any of the teachers there?

VICTORIA BARR: Do you mean at Parsons?

PAUL CUMMINGS: At Parsons, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm, two. Leo Steinberg—wonderful. He was teaching art history. He spoke beautifully. He was really poetic, very inspiring teacher. And he also taught life drawing. He drew very well himself, a la Ingres, very elegant line drawings. I liked him better as an art history teacher. And he was also a friend. He was a friend of my parents. I think that—in fact, I think that I might have introduced him to my parents, but I'm not entirely certain about that. Or they might have known about him, and then I might have said, "Listen. You know, I have this wonderful teacher." I'm not sure anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And then the person who influenced me even more was Si Sillman, who was Albers's most important assistant at Yale. And he used to commute to Parsons and teach Albers's color course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Oh, I didn't know that.

VICTORIA BARR: Let me tell you. I mean, I'd never experienced anything like that in my life. It was terrific and Si is the reason that I went to Yale. Because that was more exciting than anything else I had studied in my entire life. It was very easy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. He was a very good teacher. He was a much better teacher when he was out of the Yale milieu and in his own territory.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean his own?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because he was very much under Albers's thumb, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: And as I was at Yale when both Si and Albers were there, somehow Albers's presence—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was everywhere.

VICTORIA BARR: Was everywhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Whereas I think that when you could see Si alone, without that sort of Albers thing, he really was, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But now, why didn't you continue at Parsons?

VICTORIA BARR: Because it was such a shock to go to that kind of school after all the sort of fancy schooling that I had had.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it was surrounded by very different personalities.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the teaching side as well as the students.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aggressively ambitious.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Practical.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. And not too intelligent, I might add. At least not the—look. The thing about Parsons then—I think that may true still—is that their best students were in the fashion department.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that's one of the places you went if you wanted to be—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was the head of the school? Van Day Treux.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, that's right. Somebody with a funny name.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Right. I just was terribly lonely. Couldn't really find anybody to talk to. And just felt that I needed to get back into a milieu where I was more accustomed to the kinds of people. That is when I began to realize how fantastic the whole Harvard and Radcliffe thing was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: Not that I ever wanted to go back there, because I simply didn't want to study anymore. So, I thought, well, I'll go to Yale. And that will be like Harvard and Radcliffe, except that I won't be studying. You know, I'll be in the art school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: Si was there, you know. I thought that it was probably going to be a very good place. It was in a certain sense. I was there for four years. And what was good about it. My first year was good, the best year I had there, unfortunately. But I say "unfortunately" because it's too bad there weren't more good years. But anyway, the teacher that I had who influenced me, ultimately influenced me to become a painter, which was a very, very difficult decision for me to make, was Neil Welliver.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I took two courses with him. I took basic design, and I took first-year painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before we get into Yale.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I have two more things about Parsons.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you came back from England, you lived at home again, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: While you went to Parsons?

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. So that you were still part of the family circle.

VICTORIA BARR: After all those years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had sort of come back in a funny way.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you get involved at that time with your parents' world or the art people? I mean, you now knew who all these people were and could talk to them?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, more so, more so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, that whole aspect was more apparent. Did it interest you, or were you involved with what you were doing?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I went to a lot of exhibitions when I was here in the city. Remember the old Stable Gallery?

PAUL CUMMINGS: On Seventh Avenue?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I saw—I think I was—that year, although I'm confused about the years. I saw the Rauschenberg show there, and it made quite an impression on me. And I think that year Jasper Johns was showing first at Castelli.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A little later.

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe a bit later, yeah. Because I kept up—

PAUL CUMMINGS: A couple of years later, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I kept up with Leo, you see. And I would come down from Yale and go to a lot of exhibitions and everything, at a later—later. Because once that—that's one thing I will say for Parsons, is that although I was in graphics and advertising, I had friends who were interested in painting. That is where I began to really see more what the art scene was in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Learnt all the galleries, went around to all the galleries with my father and went around with friends, and heard about de Kooning, de Kooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From everybody.

VICTORIA BARR: From everybody.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: That stood me in very good stead when I was at Yale because one of the things that was very sad about Yale was that they did not encourage students to commute to New York on the weekends and look at the shows in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yale was very provincial that way, although there was a tremendous amount of longing for New York and the New York, you know, all of that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Milieu and everything.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. So that I knew my way around. I used to go down and see the shows. And I can tell you that to the extent that I was involved was that when the annuals were on at the Whitney, I would know. I would know the work of everybody, without having to look at the labels. I mean, I would just know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had seen it in shows.

VICTORIA BARR: They were small, of course, then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And much more intimate. There were fewer artists and they were much less American oriented in the sense of across America, across the United States. They were much more New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: New York.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. So I did. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think you have accomplished—or acquired, rather, is a better word—from the Parsons experience?

VICTORIA BARR: Now, I would say a healthy respect for fashion, for the working aspects of Seventh Avenue, and

of fashion FIT.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And a healthy respect for people who go in directly for that kind of commercial profession. If Parsons had been stronger in another area, like if it had been stronger—it was also fairly strong in industrial design, I think, at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But not as strong as fashion. But if, say, it had been in industrial design, I would have had the same kind of respect just due to exposure. But I really—I really dig that. You know, I really respect it as a profession despite what everybody says and all that kind of thing. The whole concept of the trade school, I like that if it's good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, that you learn your trade and you learn your profession. At Yale, you learn your quotes "trade," but you didn't learn your profession. You see, you didn't learn the mechanics of the system. You only learned the—I don't know how to say it.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: We need some—we need a little camera, a little photograph of that expression. But, you know, like Yale was so ivory tower. It's full of beautiful dreams. Now, Parsons was not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it had deadlines and everything else to meet. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It didn't make much of an impression on me then. I was, after all, in another department. And certainly it would have if I had stayed on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I like that. I like that a lot. And I'd like to see more of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The sense of discipline?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. And the sense of—yeah, right. You know, how to get a portfolio together, how to do it. How to do the whole thing, not just sit there and make up beautiful clothes. I love that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. What do you do once you've made the sketch, then the fabric. Does the fabric come first, then the sketch? And then the pattern and then factoring, distribution, and the whole thing.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I love that. I like the whole idea of the total system. I felt that that was there. Of course, if you were in the fashion department, I'm sure you had lots of criticisms to make. But—so, but that's the kind of thing in theory.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you decide to go to Yale?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I decided that spring; I got to know Cy. I knew I wasn't happy at Parsons and I thought that I really wanted a better education. I really couldn't—I couldn't function with the other students. I was very lonely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, I decided to go to Yale as a commercial artist in graphics.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At Yale?

VICTORIA BARR: At Yale. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Now, what I didn't understand was that the graphics department at Yale was too fast. I thought that it would be better than Parsons. But it was the same kind of orientation. The graphics department at Yale, although I don't think it was very strong—I do not think the graphic artists that have come out of Yale have been very interesting. They were really involved with printmaking, whereas I wanted to be involved with advertising, commercialism and layout.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Layout and design.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, all that kind of stuff, yeah. But you see, what happened at Yale, the way the school was set up, was that the first year you were there, you did everything together. If you were a sculptor, if you were going into graphics, if you were going into a commercial aspect of graphics, into photography, as a painter, you took the same basic courses. Then you branched out for the final three years, if you were going for a BFA.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: And so that is where I did all this painting with Neil. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that was not the first year?

VICTORIA BARR: That was the first year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: Six hours of basic design, two-dimensional and three-dimensional, and six hours of painting. Then there were other things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

VICTORIA BARR: There was drawing and painting, too. But anyway, it turned out that—I turned out to be a good painter, much to my surprise. And Neil encouraged me. He encouraged me and he encouraged me, and he was a very intelligent teacher for me and I think for some other people in the class. He had the right—he was sort of like—he was intelligent, and he was like the combination of being supportive and also like a Zen master. Often, his teaching was brief, and his statement contained a question to think about for a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And it worked for me. I have often tried to use some of that kind of brevity in my own teaching. Anyway, whatever it was, it worked and it was a really very difficult experience for me because I always have this thing in the back of my mind that I would have to make my living when I left school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. And painting didn't—

VICTORIA BARR: No, of course not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —offer any possibilities.

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: No. And so my second year at Yale was a year of very difficult decision about how to be a painter and make my living.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he influence you to be a painter, then?

VICTORIA BARR: He told me that I was crazy to become a commercial artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Based on what, do you think? I mean, why?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I never asked him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I wish I had. I didn't think that way then. I'd love to now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe sometime I will.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But however he said it, it influenced you.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So what? You then continued taking painting classes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I stayed in the painting section of this art school rather than going over into the graphics section. So frankly, it might have happened that if I had gone over to the building where the graphics were being done, and I had seen a lot of really hot-shot graphics going on, you know, really good designs—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It would have said something.

VICTORIA BARR: —it would have said something to me and I would have said, "Hey, wait a minute. I think I'm going to do this." But nothing said anything to me. I mean, it was so—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they had a very traditional, stiff—

VICTORIA BARR: I guess so. It was nonexistent. I mean, I never saw any of those people. We saw lots of printmakers, etching, lithography, all that kind of stuff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But, no. No. So—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So how long did you study with Welliver then?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, just that one year. And then I went on up through. Every summer I would go somewhere and paint and then I would bring my work back, and I would get Neil to give me crit. But he wasn't tremendously available. He was the kind of teacher that—well, you know, if you're an art teacher you're available all through the class.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That's a three-hour stint twice a week.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But then the minute the class was over, he would split.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. He wasn't the kind of guy that was necessarily out drinking with his students for hours on end.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he wasn't an on-staff teacher, was he?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't he somebody who came up for a day?

VICTORIA BARR: No. He was on staff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he was?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He lived there then?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he did. Yeah. So anyway, not that that really mattered. I just said it because I wanted to describe his style.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about other students? Were there students there that you got interested in or friendly with?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah, I did. We were all friendly. It was a very different sort of thing than any other school I'd been to. It was small. We were all in one—all the painters and sculptors were in one building in Street Hall, which is a wonderful old Victorian building, highly suited to art students, I think.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: As opposed to that new building?

VICTORIA BARR: A new building it is not.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know what that new building is suited to.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know either. And we were there and we were there. We were there all day, and we could stay late. I don't know when the building closed, maybe 10, maybe midnight.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Never.

VICTORIA BARR: Completely different concept of education. We hung out together. We stuck around. But again, I really was a fish out of water in a way. But we made friends, anyway. I mean, I made friends anyway. And it was difficult because of my father's situation at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: That I was a public figure. Everybody knew who my father was, and it affected them in various ways. It affected me in various ways, a lot of them negative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But there was a place across the street from Street Hall, an eatery, you know, where we'd all go at 11 o'clock and have coffee and donuts and stuff. And it was called My Brother's Place. People would tease me about the museum and say, "Oh, it was Your Father's Place."

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this the first time you started getting public reactions to this?

VICTORIA BARR: No. When I was at Milton I had a lot of public reaction.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: I had school friends that would come down to New York who either lived in New York or who were my guests at home, and we would go to the museum. My mother used to come to Milton and lecture. She lectured about Picasso at Milton. And Milton was very aware of who my father was and very impressed, even though it was not a visually oriented school. They had that kind of thing that people do about art, that art was something special, and that maybe they didn't understand it, but it was something special. It was a little difficult, all of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, at Yale it was a whole other ball game because it was awkward.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it was closer to their world.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it was. And I think now—I think now, I wonder what my teachers thought about teaching somebody whose father could have been so powerful to their careers, how they felt about all of that. But somehow or other, in a sense, I closed myself off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Parsons, though? There was none of that there?

VICTORIA BARR: No, not much. I mean, Leo of course, Leo knew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Si sort of knew. Albers certainly knew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: When I went to Yale, Albers certainly knew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure, because he had met your father in '27 or '28 for the first time.

VICTORIA BARR: I'm not really sure about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. In Europe.

VICTORIA BARR: So, one thing that happened, which is just a—it's just a story. But I was about to take an exam in the spring, I think, an exam on Baroque art. I was just walking in to take this exam and somebody ran up to me and said, "The Museum of Modern Art is on fire." And I'll just never forget it. I mean, there I was, and I stood and I thought, "I can't call." You know, who can I call? If the museum is on fire, I'm not going to call up the museum. My mother will not be at home. And nobody had a radio. So I went in, and I took the exam. Then I went back to where I was living, and I think I received a phone call from my mother later that day. But that was very, very rough and sort of was the beginning of a difficult period with the museum. It was complicated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can you wait one second?

[Off The Record.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: We can do a little bit more here. Anyway, the fire was '58 or something, wasn't it?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't remember either. But where did you go in the summers at Yale, when the summer appeared?

VICTORIA BARR: Not so sure, but most of the time I think I went to Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And traveled or stayed with people again?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, a little of both.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start going to Europe?

VICTORIA BARR: I started going to Europe—the first time we went to Europe was when I was 14. I went with my parents. We went to Sicily first, of all places and we looked at—I say that because, as my mother is Italian, but Roman, it was a funny place to begin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: She had never been to Sicily before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And we went basically for, one, so that my father could have a vacation and so we could all have a vacation, which we did in Taormina. We started out in Palermo, and we went to look at Byzantine mosaics, like around Monreale and Cefalu, and then we went to see the Greek temples. And then we went and stayed in Taormina with a very nice woman called Daphne Phelps, who had a villa, and looked at Mount Etna. That was beautiful. And then we went on up two days in Rome, two days in Florence. When we took the train from Platania to Messina across the Straits and went up through Italy, we got into Naples, and my mother said, "Don't look out the window. We're in Naples." She's so Roman. She had never been in Naples in her life.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Love it.

VICTORIA BARR: It was marvelous. She later went to Naples. It was fantastic.

Anyway, we charged around Rome, where of course, she had grown up. And then we did the same in Florence. The reason we did it so fast was that my father had to go to be present at the opening of the Biennale. We stayed with Peggy Guggenheim and that was extremely exciting, lots of fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that like?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it was marvelous. It was marvelous. We had some wonderful—had some wonderful times with Peggy. Not—well, that summer, what I remember is the opening of the Biennale. And then I went off to Scotland and stayed as—my first—I'm getting confused. I think—no, I went to England to stay as a paying guest in Kent with a friend of Daphne Phelps, this Englishwoman with the villa in Sicily. My parents stayed on in Italy to work, and then maybe they probably went over to see Picasso to—no. I'm getting confused.

Anyway, I went to England and then we met at the end of the summer in the south of France, where we visited in the space of the week Picasso, Matisse, and Chagall, all around in that area of Val-arise [ph] and Vons. And then we went swimming with Chagall in Monteith [ph]. Then we took a boat from Cannes. We took the *Constitution* back. That was my first trip to Europe.

[END REEL 1 SIDE B.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is the 19th of January 1977, side 3, Paul Cummings talking to Victoria Barr In her studio on 14th Street.

You went to Yale University.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Into your first year there. I wish you could talk a little more about kind of what went on besides Mr. Sillman, who was sort of your guide into Yale, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. And then I talked about Neil.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But now, only a little bit.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you study with Sillman the first year, second year, or whenever? Or was he a help into the school?

VICTORIA BARR: No, I studied with Sillman the second year. That was second-year painting. he taught a watercolor course for the entire year, which seems to me to have been much too long for a watercolor course. I don't know—I mean, I don't know whether that was his fault or not. That's just the way it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But who were your first classes with there?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, my first classes were with—when I was there first, I had Neil Welliver for basic painting, which was six hours, and basic design, which was six hours.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For both classes?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so you really had him.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes, absolutely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like him as a teacher?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I spoke about that last time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but from further consideration, again.

VICTORIA BARR: On reconsideration?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: On reconsideration, I made my definitive statement last time.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: I like him as a teacher. I don't have anything more to say about it because I don't remember. It doesn't have anything to do with Neil; it has to do with my memory. I just—I don't remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: I also took basic—no, not basic. I took the color course. Now, that's the course that Si took—Si taught at Parsons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I took it again with Albers my first or second year at Yale and that meant Albers and a few assistants, among them, Cy. And I was glad to have been able to take Albers's colors course with Albers. I mean, I felt very privileged because I think this was the most important course that he invented. And it was extremely interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, we worked with these Color-aid—these Color-aid pieces of paper. And he taught us one of the things that I would call—although he did not call it this—the relativity of color, how colors change in proximity to other colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The course had a series of exercises where—which I won't go into, because anybody can read about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And then it had a freer part, which were called color studies. The class was enormous, very popular, and very competitive. The color studies were meant to have emphasis on the interaction of color rather than be studies that were like finished collage, where form would be equally important, perhaps. I feel that this was a failing of the course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The end result or the idea of an end result was not to make an object or a work of art. It was really an experiment or a study?

VICTORIA BARR: That's right. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Using your imagination to an unresolved end?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, in a way. I think that that was—I don't think that worked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, you should have gone on and made paintings using those theories instead of just kind of color charts or something.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. No, the color charts were one day, one homework assignment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean I know what you're driving at. I want you to say it, though. It stops at a certain point.

VICTORIA BARR: It did, in a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: There was no follow-through from the color course directly expressed in the painting courses. In other words, there was no thing of you remember, you know, when you put these colors together that that happens. So the color course was very discrete, and I think that that was one of its failings.

It was also extremely interesting. I think its greatest attribute was the fact that it refined your eye. Because some of the—I mean, there was a series of things that you did like, for instance, which color is brighter? You would go around, and you would use color reproductions from magazines. You would use paint chips and you would use the Color-aid, and anything that you could find. You would make pairs of colors and you would try to make them, put them together so that they were equally bright or dark.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And you did this all through the semester.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A balancing of values.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Then you would see how your eye had refined because you could choose which color was brighter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. You'd keep these then, as a document.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. You'd keep them as a document. So the early ones in September, when you were just beginning, you could say, "Well, that pink is certainly, brighter than that ochre." Although you didn't know it in September, by mid-November you did. So you could see how your eye had refined itself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was a lot of fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really a connoisseurship in a way.

VICTORIA BARR: Very—yeah. It was not so much—I mean, I suppose you could put it that way. It was simply—it was like good—it was like wine-tasting in a way, like being trained to be a wine-taster, maybe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Where you refine your sensibility. It was like playing scales on a piano, except more fun. It was a lot of fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't like the piano, that's all.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, do you think in your painting classes you utilized much of that?

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you were painting, you would say, "Oh, now, if I want to make that brighter, I can do this next to it or that"?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, look. I mean, I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the painting was more intuitive?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. But it gave me—the painting, of course, for me at least, was much more intuitive. I think maybe with somebody like Anuszkiewicz, who went to Yale long before me, he probably made paintings that had direct bearing on the way—on the color course, you know. When you look at them, when I look at them I can see what he's doing and I can see how they would grow out of the color class, which was not the case for most of the people in the school.

I felt that I had a kind of familiarity with color that I had not had before, based on the color course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: But not based on the theories of the color course, just based on that constant, you know, searching through a packet of 350 different colors, the Color-aid packet. And—but I don't think, no. I don't think that it changed—it didn't change my—no, that's not true. It did.

One of the things that happened at Yale, which I thought was discouraging then, was that there was a certain kind of painting going on that was like quasi-landscape painting. It was nicknamed, derogatorily, "Yale-scapes." And there was a lot of sweet color that was used, you know, like a lot of pinks, lemon yellows, apple greens, ochres, sort of closely aligned sweet colors, as I call them, pinks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds like somebody who had studied with Fairfield Porter and was down a little bit.

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit. A little bit. That slight creaminess, where there's a little too much white in everything and you can see it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kind of rich pastel-y.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Which frankly, I mean, Fairfield could do it because he did other things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hard stuff to handle and make work.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, very difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I never got into that, but I found that it must have influenced me in some way. Because when I

was in India and also in Southeast Asia in recent years, I began to realize that that sweetness that had been at Yale, I found again in Southeast Asia, except there it was more exciting because it was less pastel-y. It was sweet, meaning that kind of close range.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But not pastel-y because there would be, you know, a dark blue in the middle of a very—like I have a pink shirt with bright yellow flowers. But there are speckles of dark blue in there which offset—that same tonality, so everything isn't covered with cream, pastel cream.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what were you painting at this time?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, I painted—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you very influenced by Welliver's imagery?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: His technique or style or interests? Or didn't he impose that on students?

VICTORIA BARR: He didn't want that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he would let you go off and do? Or were there special kind of class assignments?

VICTORIA BARR: No. He—everybody painted what they wanted to. He kept himself as apart as possible, according to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of, apart—

VICTORIA BARR: Of what he was painting and what his students were painting. I mean, you can't do that completely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But the class was not churning out Wellivers. And I thought that was good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you painting figures and things, or abstracts?

VICTORIA BARR: Sort of semi-figurative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Somewhat. They were quite romantic. I was involved with light a great deal then. I don't remember too much about my first year with Neil, except I do remember that my work changed a great deal. I started painting quite large.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that was because of the ambiance there?

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit, yes. Um-hm. [Affirmative.] And also because I was so encouraged by him to move, you know, to move and to move and to change.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. "Try it, try it, try it," kind of thing.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yes. Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that is the correct attitude to have towards young students?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I do. I do. Well, listen. Let me tell you something. I think it was right for me. I don't teach that way too much. I let people—I try to influence them as little as possible and to be as uncritical as possible, but to ask them constantly what it is that they want to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they evolve their own crits.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Right. It's a different kind of approach.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And now what I do is both. I ask them always, "Well, what do you want?" to do to try and

understand so I can help them go in that direction. But there was one student that I had that I treated very much the way Neil treated me, simply that—this is not exact. But she was involved with ballet dancers, right? One of the classic beginning student things for a certain kind of young woman. Pardon my prejudices, but I think it is true. I said to her—her house burnt down in the middle of the semester. She was traumatized by this experience—her family house out in New Jersey, and crying and everything. I looked at her, and here there, you know, was this sort of pink ballet world. I just said to her, "Listen, you know. Change your painting. Four feet by five feet. You have the emotional ability to really get into something."

Now, she never understood me. She resisted it and felt that I was insulting the ballet dancers. But that's what Neil did. He pushed. I don't—I think it depends on the student.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you. Was he an instructor you selected, or was he assigned?

VICTORIA BARR: Assigned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was assigned.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you took Painting 1, 2, 3 or whatever it was, and he was the instructor when you got there?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start choosing your own instructors?

VICTORIA BARR: Never.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible. It was that type of program?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. In the later years, instead of having—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always thought it was much freer up there.

VICTORIA BARR: No, not really. Everybody became more independent as they advanced with the school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: They were—first there were classrooms. Then there was a big hallway. It was a lot of booths or large cubbies where each older student had their own place, and therefore, a little bit more privacy. They had no teacher who was there all the time, like Neil or Cy. They were criticized occasionally by visiting artists who came up from New York. The artists would come up from New York and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, at what level would you start receiving that kind of—

VICTORIA BARR: Third year. No, no. Third year was techniques. That was with Bernard Chaet. And fourth-year painting—this was the BFA program at that time—very, very long. Fourth-year painting, we had visiting artists who came up from New York. And they also taught the MFA classes. They weren't classes, though, they were individual crits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And, you either lucked out with who came up or you didn't luck out. You know, that person either had some sense about what you were doing or they didn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like that?

VICTORIA BARR: I thought it was good. But I tell you something. I have some criticisms about Yale, which I still feel strongly about. And that is that at that time, there was a feeling about New York. The feeling, whether it was correct or not, was that nobody would leave New York for a minute, not even to go to New Haven, to teach. We had a feeling that there was not a great deal of money around and that, had there been more money, we could have hired—let's say the school—the students would express who they wished to have come up. And then the school would hire them if there had been more money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. You mean, if a dozen students got together and said, "We want X to come and

teach"?

VICTORIA BARR: That was the ideal, yeah. I mean, we all knew each other very well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And we knew enough about what was going on in the art world and, you know, in the painting world in New York so that we would have ideally liked to be able to go to—I don't know—I mean, to Albers or whoever and say, "Look. We would really like to have so-and-so come up." But we always sensed that the reason that they didn't was that there wasn't enough money. I mean, the art school was one of the poor schools on the Yale campus.

Also, there was this thing about New York, New York, this tremendous sense that New York was it, which no longer exists anymore. But it certainly did then. It was the end of the sort of—the end where the Abstract Expressionist movement and its supremacy over all other movements was beginning to crack. And it was a time of tension and transition. I want just to say this now, although the time thing is not the same.

That is that when—soon after I left, and I graduated in 1961. While I was still there, we knew that there was going to be a new building built and that the students would move out of Street Hall and out of Crown Street, which used to be a derelicts' bar and was a beautiful building where the MFA students painted very independently. It was very unusual for a school, and I think a very good thing.

Anyway, everybody was eventually going to move into this new building. We were, in fact, asked what it was that we felt would be ideal. The fact is, and I will say this for the record, for all time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right.

VICTORIA BARR: I feel very, very, strongly about it. And that is that we were all right where we were. We liked the building. It did not drive us crazy in any way, neither Temple Street nor Crown Street—in other words, neither Street Hall nor Crown Street. The school should have used that money to hire, make the teachers' salaries higher, and to give more scholarships, because there were some very poor students in the school who worked at jobs and who were really tired and who were not able to live the kind of life that I feel is necessary for an art student, which means all this sort of learning from one another and hanging out, which I think is very much, very important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, the minute the class was over, the students who were on scholarship would go out the door and go to work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, and miss the most important part sometimes.

VICTORIA BARR: Sometimes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I still feel angry about it. Although I know that probably the funds were for a new building and not for the essentials, I feel that those are very distorted values. And I think I will always feel that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Perhaps you can get money for a building because you can see it.

VICTORIA BARR: It's there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's hard to get money for teaching.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I know. But I still feel that there could be a kind of recognition of the Delnors [ph]. You know, there could be plaques in the building. There could be scholarships that had names. There could be teaching fellows who were named after the Delnors [ph]. There could be—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lots of things.

VICTORIA BARR: Lots of things, like a big party or something where the students and the teachers met the Delnors [ph] or met the relatives of the Delnors [ph], or, you know, any number of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Like, I mean, look at Fulbright, right? I mean, he didn't build a building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, I mean, that's not the same thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In a way. It's parallel.

VICTORIA BARR: But what I'm trying to say is, it's recognition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The necessary recognition. And also, there could be an official explanation, which could be put up on a beautiful brass plaque that could say that the general consensus of opinion was that the money should be used for salaries and scholarships and not for buildings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Let me ask you something. Did you find that, as you were up there, that the people who had reputations as painters as opposed to those who had reputations as academics, was there a conflict there?

VICTORIA BARR: Probably there was. But there was a lot of turbulent feeling in the school. I'm not answering your question directly, though. If there was conflict between the people who were more academic—and by that, I assume that you mean people who were on salary there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I would say the difference between someone like Chaet and Albers or—who else was up there? I can't think of all the other people.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, Jim Brooks was there and Rico Denari, Nick Carone.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I mean, people who had liaisons with New York galleries and a career and were showing with dealers, museums and that sort of thing.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As opposed to the people who might not.

VICTORIA BARR: I feel that if there was. I was not very aware of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It didn't make any dent.

VICTORIA BARR: No, not really. There was a lot of turbulent feeling in the school because Albers was in the process of retiring when I was there. And there was a transitional period, which was very difficult that is a sort of adjacent kind of situation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But now, he retired after you left, though, didn't he?

VICTORIA BARR: No. He retired before I left.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before you left?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Did you have any friends there who were important and fellow students?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were important to you?

VICTORIA BARR: I had—well, we all—as I said, the school was so small that we all knew one another. I had a special feeling for the group of students who came up from Cooper Union, because they were New Yorkers. And I felt that I had some kind of affinity with them, even though my style was very different and I'd never been to Cooper. Nevertheless, we sort of felt that we knew New York in a way that maybe some of the other students didn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I mean, it was true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Among those students were two people who were not in my class, so I was not as close to them

as I might have been. But a guy called Vic Moscoso, who moved to California after he left Yale and became a psychedelic—one of the great—not great, but one of the really good—I say "not great" because I don't think that there is such a thing as a great psychedelic poster designer. But anyway, he became a really good psychedelic poster designer in the '60s. And he also made surrealist cartoons that were in the same kinds of magazines that R. Crumb published in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I can't remember what they're called because I wasn't really—I didn't read them a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But that was quite an astonishing turn, because it certainly wasn't the Victor Moscoso that I knew at Yale. The '60s really swept a lot of people in different directions.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

VICTORIA BARR: But I remember—I must say this. I liked Victor a lot. He was talented. And he came to New York in about 1967 or '68, called me, and asked me out for dinner. As I was getting ready to have dinner with him, he called again, and he cancelled the dinner because he said he had to make a poster. I was not very pleased about this and thought, "Well, you know, okay, right." And later, I saw his posters in the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of posters from California from, the whole rock, LSD, psychedelic thing. And there were Victor's posters, and I suddenly understood that he wasn't just—

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Making a little poster.

VICTORIA BARR: —making a poster. I thought to myself, you know, "What is this?" I have not seen him in a long time, and I have no idea about his life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened from the middle. Did you ever see him then?

VICTORIA BARR: No, I never saw him then. And I have never seen him, but I keep up with him. I have friends who go out to San Francisco and have seen him. If I ever go there, I will certainly look him up.

Then another friend who was very close to Victor at Yale was Eva Hesse. Victor was very successful at Yale, and so was Eva. Eva and Albers got along very well, and she did brilliantly in his color course. She had a brilliant sense of color, which is interesting because she never used that when she got out. Her pieces—

PAUL CUMMINGS: She went into drawings, in a way, though.

VICTORIA BARR: Her drawings, a little bit, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But if you knew how she worked with color at Yale, it's amazing that her work changed and dropped all of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: She worked very hard. Everybody worked hard. There were a few people who didn't work hard. She worked extra hard. I continued to be friends with her when she came to New York, but not close friends, no. But we still had this—you know, we still had this sort of sense, as I certainly would with Victor, except that he wasn't in the same city. You know, that we had gone through school together. She was a year ahead of me. And it was—I saw her when she was dying. It was a shattering experience for me, and I think for a lot of other people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

VICTORIA BARR: A sort of sense of, why does somebody die when they're so young? You know, that would seem to me to be the dilemma of Eva.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I didn't understand too much her—the work for which she is best known. I do understand it more now. I feel more for Eva when I see her work than I have any particular strong feelings for the work itself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But then, from Coopers still, Sylvia Mangold, who was Sylvia Plimack then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sylvia—

VICTORIA BARR: Mangold. Bob Mangold's wife.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but what was her other name?

VICTORIA BARR: Plimack.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Plimack?

VICTORIA BARR: Plimack was her maiden name. She was a very nice person. And she met Bob Mangold at Yale, and they got married while they were at Yale. They were both in my class, fourth-year painting class.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And then, Diana Cowen, who is not from New York, who was not in my class, but I see every now and then now. We've kept up our friendship and I have in recent years spent some time with her and Louise Nevelson.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was she studying painting then?

VICTORIA BARR: She was studying painting at Yale. And then I had another group of friends at Yale, a man called Bahman Farmian [ph]. And he was known as Farman; he was Iranian. And Michael Chelminski, C-h-e-l-m-i-n-s-k-i and Robert Ross, and we were sort of friends together. A woman who came later called Rachel Katzin, who is now Rachel Shatarof [ph]. We spent a lot of time together. I had, in a sense, a more friendly relationship with the people I have just mentioned and a less professional relationship with them. I spent more time with Farman really than anybody else. We used to come down to New York and go and hear a lot of jazz together. He knew a lot about jazz. We used to go to the Five Spot and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Half Mill.

VICTORIA BARR: The Half Mill.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The Half Mill, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Such a fantastic club, really. I heard Coltrane there. And I heard him play that terrible—that terrible tune from *Sound of Music* that always has that thing about wonderful things. It was recorded called the Coltrane version—was recorded. I think it is one of the most brilliant jazz recordings ever made and I heard Coltrane play it at the Half Mill with Farman.

We used to get on the train in the evening from New Haven, go and hear the jazz, and go back to New Haven the same evening. We'd get on, you know, like the milk train in the morning with movie magazines. We'd come back to New Haven, all through the whole thing—it was terrific. He lived in New York in a different milieu from that which I was accustomed to. And I must say, thinking about women's liberation, that my life in the jazz world, I never would have had it if it hadn't been for Farman. I never could have done it alone. Now, maybe, but not then. No way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was never a woman's world, jazz.

VICTORIA BARR: Never, never, never. We listened to a lot of jazz when we were at Yale. Farman had a terrific collection. Then Michael Chelminski lived in Wilton, Connecticut, with his family. And we would go there, often. Both his parents were alive then and they had a nice house. They were very hospitable. They had a house, and then they had a barn. Michael was one of four brothers. The first time I went to Michael's, there was a large boat, almost like an ark, in the yard, which threw everything out of scale. The brothers were building this boat—not Michael, but two of the other brothers.

Those two brothers were Victor and Paul. And they have become oceanographers now, and they run something called Bolt Associates in Norwalk, which is a very successful oceanographic—what it is is, they invent things for oceanography. They're inventing a way of drilling for oil in the oil derricks in the water where there is no noise. A noiseless—I don't know how to say it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway. And they invented certain kinds of sonar systems so they could hear whether there was oil, according to the reverberations that came from the floor of the ocean and stuff like that. They're very successful.

Then there was another brother, Rudy, who became the bureau chief for *Life* magazine both in Paris and in the USSR, and is still living in Paris now. He's a journalist. And so we all got to know one another, and I still keep up with all of them, more or less.

So those were my friends there. And everybody was—now, everybody was friendly. I think there may have been—people may have had very complicated feelings about me. But for the most part, they either stayed away or they were really discreet. I think I had really no sense of the kind of effect that I might have had because of being Alfred Barr's daughter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I just don't know. It was a school that was, according to me, although it was not—it was really not too sexist. And it was fairly classless. So that when the sort of violence of the '60s came along, I was really shocked because it seemed to be an equal society within the school. Now, I don't know about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I'd have to look again. I wish I could go back and check it out again with my perceptions now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But I mean, I think also, although we were politically conscious in the sense that we understood that the building, the whole issue of the building was a political issue in a sense. You know, it was an economic issue, political and economic issue having to do with poverty, frankly. On the other hand, there was no violence against the institution at the time when I was there. It wasn't turned against the institution. It was energy to correct the wrongs within the institution.

When I heard that the building had burnt, I felt—my personal opinion—

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is the Rudolph building.

VICTORIA BARR: This is the Rudolph building, in the turbulence of the '60s. My personal opinion was that it was deliberately burnt and that they hushed it up. And whether they found out who did it or not I will never know. Maybe somebody knows; maybe they don't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: This seemed to me to be very, very shocking and very, very different from when I was there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, now, what did you do in the summers between '57 and '61, the years that you were there? Because you obviously didn't spend all summer in New Haven, I mean all year.

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you stay in New York? Would you travel?

VICTORIA BARR: I never went to—I never stayed in New Haven, and I never stayed in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go to Europe?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I went to Europe. One summer, I traveled through northern Europe down into Italy with John McAndrew, who was then an architectural historian at Wellesley, and his wife Betty. We were close friends. We saw a lot of exciting things, such as the *Isenheim Altarpiece* [1512-1516] in Colmar. We went to Vorbes's [ph] *Mines and Spire*. We went to Aix-les-Bains, to Strasbourg. I'm not getting the order correctly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then we went to one of the lakes, either Lago Maggiore, or—I don't know. But it's the same lake where the—you know that castle, that very famous castle, Chattee [ph], or whatever it's called there? They wrote a poem about it. Anyway, maybe I'll think of it. It was that lake. Somebody was imprisoned in the castle. Does that ring a bell?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kafka's, *The Woman of Marista*? Kafka?

VICTORIA BARR: No. It was somebody else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pound? Eliot?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Roman? Aurelius?

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe I'll think about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm running out of lakes. But you never did anything—other than the summers at Yale, you never took a studio and continued painting, or did you?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] On Fishers Island, I spent one summer painting on Fishers Island. I spent one summer in Cambridge painting. I'd forgot about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How does Cambridge come about? This is Cambridge, Mass?

VICTORIA BARR: Massachusetts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right.

VICTORIA BARR: Because I missed my friends at Harvard and Radcliffe. And I went back to be among them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was that?

VICTORIA BARR: It didn't work out too well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Return experience?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had changed. Their world had changed. It was different.

VICTORIA BARR: A lot of them weren't there. I mean, you have to—the worst ones, the worst lesson is remembering or bearing in mind the fact that you can't do it again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know? A lot of the people weren't there. It was hot, lonely. So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what do you think of Yale now as far as the whole art education was in those days? Has it been useful for you in your painting? Was it useful for you, now that you teach?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah, it was. I'll tell you what I liked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In one way more way than the other?

VICTORIA BARR: I felt that—I tell you. I think that I have become a better teacher than many of my teachers. I have used things that I learnt at Yale in my teaching. Yale, for the most part, was oriented towards form, formal analysis, whatever I want to call it, towards the analysis of space, the analysis of color.

What I mean by the analysis of space is simply, is that tree in front of the building? Should you put it over a quarter of an inch so that it really looks as if it's in front of the building? Do you really mean it to be where—there? So that if you want it in front of the building, you're going to put it in front of the building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It's a sort of raising of your consciousness in that way. It was good.

They were very tough about drawing in that the tradition was to draw like Ingres or Holbein, meaning that you had to make line drawings. You know, no fudging around. And that is what they didn't want. But what they didn't realize was that—and this is what I feel very strongly about—is that everybody has a way of expressing themselves. I feel that, for me, although I certainly could use some of that discipline, that it was totally

inappropriate for the way I was later to find myself expressing myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But do you think it was just that, a discipline? Not necessarily telling you, "This is the style in which you should work," but "This is a way to learn how to draw and to look and know your materials"? And then you can go do what you want after you have been through that.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, this may be—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It can be inhibiting, though.

VICTORIA BARR: It was very inhibiting. In fact, this may be so. If it was so, they never told us.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: I will tell you a story, though, which I remember. And that was that in these drawing courses, we eventually had, like three or four notebooks at the end of the semester. And the instructor would look through the notebook, just go through—quick, quick, quick, quick—looking at the drawings in order to make up his mind—it was always his mind—what mark you were going to get.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I had all these drawings, line drawings and everything. And then in one corner, we had been drawing, you know, two- or three-minute drawings. I had gotten really angry and I had just taken my pen or my pencil and scrawled, a sort of violent, but nevertheless still figurative, you know, a drawing of the model.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: The instructor stopped and said, "This is the best drawing you've ever made." And I thought that—I thought that he—I forgot about this for years. When he told me I was very resentful, because I had felt that I had not been successful in my attempts to draw the other way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, with a fine line?

VICTORIA BARR: With a very refined line and everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I didn't understand what he was saying. Now I understand it completely. And he was absolutely correct, even though he was one of the people who really could draw very beautifully in the other kind of stuff. But there was no—the thing that I'm leading up to is, okay, discipline, fine, important. Every artist needs as much discipline as they can get because they're alone so much that that discipline makes structure in their lives later in one way or another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: It's awfully easy not to be disciplined. Either you're having too much fun or you're so depressed you can't see straight. And the discipline will pull you through in a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But my objection to Yale was—and I feel that it was an enormous, enormous lacking there—that feeling was never mentioned. Feeling or expression of feeling was never mentioned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? By the instructors or anybody?

VICTORIA BARR: No. Nobody ever said—and it was interesting, too, because Abstract Expressionism, at least at the beginning of my time at Yale, was still in favor in New York. People were still thinking about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: But thinking about it at Yale in formal terms. Nobody ever said—nobody ever—I never at Yale had a discussion with anybody about, let's say the de Kooning women. Okay. I mean, speaking of feeling. I don't blame Yale entirely. I mean, after all, I could have done it at any moment. But nobody said, you know, that feeling was so much a part of making a work of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't you also find that that's sort of the standard American problem?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Feeling becomes personal and intimate.

VICTORIA BARR: Yep.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And very few people know how to handle their own feelings, much less those of others?

VICTORIA BARR: Right. I have found that. And it's gotten me into a lot of trouble.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Not only in my life, also in my art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And I try when I teach at Barnard to talk in an even balance between form and feeling. I think both are equally important. Feeling may be—well, I don't want to go into, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They have to charge each other, because otherwise one just becomes bland.

VICTORIA BARR: They have to, yeah. Yes, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Bland.

VICTORIA BARR: Either the form becomes empty or the feeling. Without the form, in painting, at least.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Definitely in talking about painting, at least. So anyway, that was a terrible lacking. I'm sure that it had something to do with Albers. It had to do with what we just talked about, about how difficult it is to handle feelings. But if only this teacher that I was telling you about, who found that drawing, had sat me down and said, "Look." You know, nobody—I mean, after all, when you're a student, theoretically, the teachers are there to teach you, right?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was the teacher? Who was the instructor?

VICTORIA BARR: Bill Bailey.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Who I've come to like in recent years, although I hardly ever see him. I've come to have very good feelings about him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And it's so interesting to me that he should have been skilled in drawing these line drawings, and yet should have been open enough to spot that one drawing which was completely discordant with anything that had been made in the class, not only by me, but by anybody else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What? Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And yet, what a shame that he didn't really shake me and say, "Look. Maybe this is more for you."

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's hard to do.

VICTORIA BARR: Very hard. I do it, though. It's not that hard. [Laughs.] But I've had a lot of experiences now that maybe he never had.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: People are afraid of feelings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. How did your own work change over the four years you were there in terms of approach and imagery, what you were doing?

VICTORIA BARR: I really don't feel very much like talking about my work at that time. I think that I was most successful my first year, was not successful in Cy's course because he wanted people to—no. I want to state this a little less critically. What I'm trying to say is that the general style, as in the drawing courses, was Holbein and

Ingres, in Cy's course was Cezanne, Cezanne watercolors. Well, I wasn't interested in Cezanne then. I don't have that kind of sensibility, still, although now I love Cezanne watercolors. I'm not particularly influenced by him. So we would be painting, these apples and still lifes. It was very strict, by the way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you would set of problems to paint.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, yeah. And here I was with all these ideas about paintings that I wanted to paint. So then every three weeks we would have a free week, where we could paint everything. And my most successful paintings came every three weeks.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: That was not a good year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but that's instructive sometimes.

VICTORIA BARR: I guess so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure.

VICTORIA BARR: Sure it is. I didn't like it, but I agree with you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

VICTORIA BARR: It was oppressive, though.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you don't find you produced any work in those years that you're really at ease with?

VICTORIA BARR: No. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was too much regime and too much imposition. You kept fighting, too, in a way.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yes, I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I think that sometimes I see a little influence from some of the work that I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean now?

VICTORIA BARR: Now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not then?

VICTORIA BARR: No. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what happened as you went through Yale in your last year there? What did you decide to do? I mean, were you preparing to teach when you came out? Did you want to come and open a studio and work? You know, you knew that in 1961 then that was the year away you had to do something.

VICTORIA BARR: I was in a quandary and had had these ongoing discussions with Neil about how I could be a commercial artist and a painter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it had come back, in a way?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or had it kept popping up?

VICTORIA BARR: It kept popping up, because I was in a state of great anxiety. In a sense, I had—that was the early sort of feminist—early pre-recent women's movement, feminist attitude that I would have to make my living. This was, of course, incongruous with the fact that I was—I had chosen a profession where you do not necessarily make your living.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I did not want to teach. I think that I really did not like the teaching, did not admire the teaching. Many of the people who were at Yale who were visiting critics who came up from New York—and I

won't—I just felt that they were not really doing their stuff and it was very lightweight.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what? The teaching or their own work?

VICTORIA BARR: In their teaching, and I didn't mind about their own work. Because as long as they could teach—I've always been of the school of thought that if you can teach well, it really doesn't matter what your work is like. If you have things to say that have bearing, I never felt, I mean, I'm sure that there are very, very great artists who simply can't teach at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what did you want from the visiting artists that you didn't get?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh.

[Pause]

VICTORIA BARR: More intelligence, more interest, more substance, and more guidance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: We all had the feeling that they—we started working at nine. And they come in around 11. Then they go out for a long lunch. There was a lot of bad feeling about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you got them a couple of hours a day.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, more than a couple of hours, but not as much as they should have been there. Students really pick up fast on teachers who are not serious. The students at Yale were very serious, for the most part. I really would like to go on to something else because I think that this is a long time ago. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but, you know, it helps to provide the background of what one did, what one reacts against or whatever.

VICTORIA BARR: That's true. That's true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, it's not superficial in any way.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, one thing that I would like to say about being a student at that time was—picture the school as I have described it and its emphasis on the formal in whatever. Picture them in New York, the Abstract Expressionists, right?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And I think one of my dilemmas was that I knew that I was not going to be painting in the vein of, say, Mondrian or Albers. I knew also, God forbid I should be a fifth-generation Abstract Expressionist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Whatever tender age I would have been.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There was a real dilemma at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were aware, and the other students were aware, that this was something that should you should be cognizant of?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I think so. There was a general feeling of—more of—I mean, nobody painted—nobody painted like Albers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. There was a general feeling of, do not paint like your teacher. I mean, it was simple. It was like copying.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Of course, the fact is that somebody like Anuszkiewicz came very directly out of Albers's teachings, and I think is a rather successful painter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He has become quite his own person in a way.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he has.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But the general feeling then was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hard to do.

VICTORIA BARR: Very, very hard. Because imagine the kind of criticism that he might have got.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, "Oh, look at him just doing the color course. Oh, my God!" You know, that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. And then there was the whole—the Abstract Expressionist business, of course, was, well, I mean, that place was already taken. They had done it. And of course, in a sense, the first generation—no, I'm going to take that back. But anyway, there were people who were involved with Abstract Expressionism at that time at Yale. But it was also looked down on a bit.

Listen, it was hard going. It was really hard going in a sense. There seemed to be no—the only thing I can say is that as I look back on it, one of the problems about Abstract Expressionism was not the quality of the artist that we think of now as being the sort of Titians of their time, I mean, even though you can't—I always hate to call Rothko an Abstract Expressionist. But anyway, like Rothko and de Kooning, Kline and so on and so forth. That the mode or the genre of Abstract Expressionism had become a tyranny in the art world. That there were people who might have painted differently if Abstract Expressionism had not been the only going thing. You know what I mean, the only going thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, pervasive.

VICTORIA BARR: Pervasive. It was horrible. It was like overdosing on anything. It was disgusting and terribly damaging to some people who simply did not have that sensibility, that kind of feeling, or anything.

At Yale, at least the tyranny of Abstract Expressionism did not exist. And I must say that, although the '70s are very diffused and often not very interesting in terms of painting, at least now there is no tyranny.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And it's too bad because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's nothing to use or react against.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I don't mind that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Strongly.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it must be bad for younger people. As for me, now, I don't care anymore. I mean, I don't need that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yale really was a very contrasting situation.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But eventually, what happened? It has become useful. I mean, you do find things now that you use in your teaching.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I do. And I use my teaching in my own life, in my own life as an artist, in my own work. I try more and more to connect up my teaching with the issues that I'm trying to deal with, still, on my own.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of your work, right?

VICTORIA BARR: In terms of my work, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: So that as I am teaching my students, I am teaching myself—my students, I am teaching myself. Because otherwise, I'd just go to sleep, I talk for so long.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But in terms of how Yale—how going through Yale made me the painter I am today, I can't sort it out. That's just too long ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's all right.

[END OF REEL 2 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side four.

VICTORIA BARR: Is that so?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm saying it's side four. So you wanted to say something else about Yale.

VICTORIA BARR: I just wanted to say one other thing about Yale. And that is that I really think that I was in a dilemma when I was there because as I have been speaking, I am remembering things. the more I was myself—to wit, the drawing in the drawing class, but also in the painting classes. The more I was myself, the more successful I was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But there was always that need of mine to be successful in the way that Yale held up as being successful. So that I was not able at that time to consider what I had done that made me successful and which elicited interest from the teachers, even though their thoughts were elsewhere. They taught one way, then I would come up with something that had nothing to do with the way they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Didn't fit into their scheme. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Didn't fit in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And it happened over and over again in every class. The only class where it didn't happen was in Neil's class in the first year. In every other class, my successes were so at odds with the general attitude of the teaching that I never could understand. I didn't have the ability to understand what was going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you define your success in contra-distinction?

VICTORIA BARR: In that suddenly somebody would come along and say, "Hey, that's a great painting." It would be very different from—well, it's easier to talk about the drawing courses. Every time my drawings became more expressionistic, although—well, I don't want to go—I said it all before. It's just the more expressionistic they became, they more—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They worked.

VICTORIA BARR: —they more they worked and the more at odds they were with the way all the other drawings in the class, both successful and unsuccessful. So, anyway. But that's the story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was your individuality that was beginning to express itself, which you couldn't cope with, or they couldn't cope with.

VICTORIA BARR: They couldn't cope with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Or there was no—in the sense that there was not the class—

PAUL CUMMINGS: There wasn't a slot for it in their scheme.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. There wasn't a slot for it and there wasn't a way—only Neil was able to encourage me as an individual.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting.

VICTORIA BARR: None of the others really were. They could spot it, but then they couldn't say, "Now, look. You know, I know you're not drawing like Ang."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: "And frankly, although I am teaching a course where drawing is done in this manner for the reasons that you know, I don't think it's for you, and I would like to encourage you to draw in [Inaudible]."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think they were afraid to say that, though?

VICTORIA BARR: I have no idea. I don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's the way it happened.

VICTORIA BARR: That's the way it was. I really don't know. Perhaps it was different for every teacher, for their reasons. I mean, Cy—after all, I mean, I was—I knew Cy. I had been in his class in Parsons. Any idiot could have seen that I was not cut out to paint like—to paint Cezanne watercolors. I wasn't interested in it. It wasn't for me in any way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway, that's the end of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's that. Okay. Anyway, in this summer of '61 you went off to Aspen, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, that's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how did that all come about? Why Aspen and how? And you spent so much time in and out of there for the next two years.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I know I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did Aspen become the place to hang out?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, that's what it ultimately became. I got a teaching scholarship at a fly-by-night art school in Aspen, which I did not know was fly-by-night.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find out about it?

VICTORIA BARR: Off a bulletin board at Yale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You got there, and it fell apart or something?

VICTORIA BARR: I got there under false—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Cause?

VICTORIA BARR: No—anyway, what—a teaching scholarship was promised me. And it turned out that this person who ran the school, whose name was Jerry something-or-other, had no intention of paying me or—anyway, I was misled.

PAUL CUMMINGS: False pretenses.

VICTORIA BARR: False pretenses, exactly. And I quit the job after about a month. But I liked Aspen a lot. What I liked about it was I liked the West. I had been in the West before at this famous Perry-Mansfield Camp, which was in another part of Colorado near a pass called Rabbit Ears.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, Steamboat Springs. That's where Perry-Mansfield was. Anyway, I liked the West a lot. There were certain things I liked about Aspen. I got to be very friendly with Herbert and Joe Alafier [ph] very soon on, because they were friends of my parents. I liked them, I was disappointed in the town already, that it was such a jumble and that it was often pretentious. The restoration of the Victorian houses seemed to me to be a good idea. I did not like the way they were painted. I thought they looked arty, that they should have been painted traditionally in the colors that were used at the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were they painted?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, sort of arty colors. You know, like ochre with sort of rust shutters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like pumpkins on Halloween or something.

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit. A little too arty, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But there were a lot of Victorian—there were a lot of Victorian houses around, and then the Jerome Hotel was also from the silver mining.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That was painted very beautifully, white with a beautiful kind of middle blue with a little green in it. It was going strong then. I know it's had periods when it's been sort of closed and stuff like that. But the town—upon my entering the town, I looked around and I thought, "Oh, how ugly." I was really, really disappointed also because it was not as Western as Steamboat Springs. Later I was glad of this. But it didn't have the same kind of feeling that Steamboat Springs had had, I guess, in the late '40s, early '50s. It was not a Western town. It was very cosmopolitan, and ultimately I became very thankful for that, because I stayed there for a year-and-a-half, ultimately.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, you had jobs and did all sorts of other little activities.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I had a wonderful job. I worked—I quit Jerry Price, that was her name. She had such a bad reputation that ultimately she was kicked out of Aspen and moved to Santa Fe, where I really feel that she had more possibility of thriving.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow, I went through the rest of the summer getting to know the town, getting to know the people in the town. I lived in a boardinghouse, a rooming house. Of course, all those things were functioning very well because they were used in wintertime for skiers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: This would have been a place where students would have stayed. It was fun. Met a lot of people. And I liked it so much that I decided not to go back to New York. It was a wonderful change from New Haven.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you set up a studio there and work?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened?

VICTORIA BARR: What I did was that I worked a little bit in the summer. I drew a lot. I don't remember painting. Oh, yes, I had a studio immediately. I had a studio near the music tent in somebody's garage. I kept that studio all summer long, and I painted a lot. I remember those paintings now. I had forgotten for a minute. And I saw some of the artists who were involved with Jerry Price's school. Ed Dugmore was out there. Somebody from Philadelphia whose name might be Day. Larry Day?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know.

VICTORIA BARR: Anyhow, so when I quit—when I quit Jerry Price's school, there was a gap working. Then I thought that I would be a waitress because this was what a lot of people did there. This was an easy way to get work. Particularly if you were there in the summer, you could get a good winter job if you were there in the summer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Because of the ski season and everything. I ultimately ended up working for Patricia Moore, who had a store that was a little bit like Design Research used to be, but not as—it was more eclectic than Design Research. She had a very accurate take on who her—who came into her store and all their tastes. And it was an excellent store. She's still running it. I worked in a hotel that was called The Meadows and she had an annex. So that what I did was, I worked at night. I worked from—I don't know. Let's say from 6:00 to 11:00 at night, independently of Patricia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, so it was like your own little—

VICTORIA BARR: It was like my own store.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Your own place, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I worked out at the Meadows because it had at that time, theoretically, the best restaurant in Aspen, which was called the Copper Kettle, and which was in the basement of The Meadows. And so people would go out there to eat, and then they would wander up and go into the store, or vice-versa.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And The Meadows Hotel was designed by Herbert Bayer. I just want to say that. He designed a lot of buildings in Aspen.

So, that gets us into the winter. And I had moved from this rooming house into an apartment that was upstairs from Bayer's office. This is a very nice apartment, which they fixed up. I loved it. It had a skylight. Part of the kitchen was bright red, and it was pretty. And it had two big rooms. One was my bedroom, and one was my studio. It was just real nice. It was right in the middle of the town.

Herbert and Joella were there for me. I mean, I must say that I never had any overwhelming needs of any kind, but they were there. And I was very friendly with them. I used to go and visit them in their house on Aspen Mountain. I spent Christmas Day with them. We had lunch outdoors, imagine, Christmas Day—this is an Easterner, right? In our heavy sweaters having a lunch outdoors in the sunlight with binoculars on the table so that we could look at the skiers coming down Aspen Mountain. It was terrific.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic!

VICTORIA BARR: Really just beautiful!

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I loved it. I was terribly happy and filled with life and good health and all those kinds of things that did not exist in New Haven. And that year in Aspen made it—it was a tremendous influence on me in all sorts of different ways.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For example?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, to continue along the vein that I've just spoken about, I had never seen people live so well before in my life, in the sense of being in an environment that enhanced their lives daily. I mean, Herbert used to go skiing at lunchtime. He would go up for a run down the mountain. So did Patricia on certain days if it wasn't too busy, Patricia Moore. When I used to paint, even if I was depressed—like at two o'clock I'd come out. Two o'clock in the afternoon, I'd come out and see the world. If I was feeling low, I was usually on my way to the post office to get my mail. By the time I got there, the weather was so beautiful, everybody looked so healthy that I stopped being depressed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: This has never happened to me before or since. It was just marvelous. Also, it was a new experience to be surrounded by a community which superficially was very homogeneous, after New York and after New Haven. There were no slums. There were very few desperate poor people. There were some poor people, but they weren't desperate, for the most part.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There was a tremendous emphasis on physical beauty, which I had never seen in such en masse before. Even though there was a faction of people who were going around in jeans and work-clothes, the way I think style turned into in the '60s, it wasn't like that when I was there. I mean, most people were very handsomely dressed in Wagner ski pants and very elegant parkas. And they had suntans. I'd never been anywhere in the winter in my life where anybody had a suntan. I was stunned by the beauty and the physical

health.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But were they people who lived there or people who came through?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Well, people—both. There were, of course, the Beautiful People, as they are known now. They were already there. They, of course, are not so beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In real life?

VICTORIA BARR: In real life, they are not. They are very sad a lot of times. But overall, you know, the ski instructors, the merchants—everybody had this kind of—I'm making a sweeping generalization. I know somebody who committed suicide there, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But in general, there was this kind of elan about being out of doors. I understood how—I mean, I understood a lot of things about how, if you live differently, it can affect your temperament.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, of course. Absolutely. Absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: And very positively. Finally, though, I think Aspen—the only way to survive Aspen is to live there as you would live anywhere and have a job and you work at that job. And you try and live a stable life. The most successful people in Aspen are the people like Bill Dunaway, who ran the *Aspen Times*, who is a friend of mine—works all the time. He goes mountain-climbing. He's been climbing in Nepal and Afghanistan. But he runs a newspaper. Patricia runs her store. Herbert and Joella—I mean, Herbert was in his office every day.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was he doing then, designing?

VICTORIA BARR: Designing buildings, for the most part, yes. Working for the—every now and then for the Container Corporation.

The other people who survived well were young skiers, ski bums. They skied, they worked—most of them worked as waiters or—I don't know what else. Mostly as waiters and all the other things surrounding restaurants.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Service organizations.

VICTORIA BARR: Service, yeah. They—some of them skied very well. Some of them turned pro. But this was success at 19 to 24, 19 to 26. And it was a certain kind of—it had something to do with youth and life, and it was very successful. But the people who stayed too long, unless they went into business—and some of my friends who were ski bums turned into very good businessmen. Had a friend called Joey Cabell, who turned out to be the world's surfing champion. He was from Hawaii. He and a guy called Buzzy Bent opened up a restaurant near where I lived called The Chart House. Now, they had both been to business college in California, and as they grew, they began to go into business.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And they were very successful. I think they still are. I don't really know. But I kept hearing about them in later years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was exciting. It was a great way to break out of the whole school syndrome, which was so oppressive for so many people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was also successful in a different way. And that was that it was just the beginning of the '60s. The '60s made its appearance in Aspen via drugs, not via anything having to do with politics, neither civil rights or anything else, because Aspen is not like that. Later, of course, Aspen became very involved with ecology, but not at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: What was happening at that time—and I think probably a little bit naïve about it. But the main drug that was around was marijuana. It was smoked very openly. The thing that was so startling was, in the East, you smoked it when you listened to jazz, and everybody sort of withdrew and listened to the music. And if there was a knock on the door, you hit it or you flushed it down the john—extreme paranoia, really extreme. In

Aspen, it was smoked openly. And it was not smoked on the streets. But there were people who went down the streets stoned, and the police looked the other way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And it was very, very free. People grew it. And it was not—it was not discussed with the same kind of sort of sub-rosa kind of intensity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, also, it wasn't being hustled out there by the same kind of people.

VICTORIA BARR: No, it was not. And it was fun. It was fun, fun, fun, like the Beach Boys.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There you go.

VICTORIA BARR: It was. You know, and I had never experienced that before. In New Haven, I never smoked any dope because I was taking a stance against it. In Aspen, I started smoking dope. It probably was very high-quality and the person who turned me on was a guy called Martin Gleason, to whom I am forever indebted because the first—well, my first experiences with dope influenced my painting more than any other single experience I've ever had in my life. I think that I was primed for this by my training at Yale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, that you will have to explain. How do you mean that?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, what I mean was that if I had not been trained—no, let me say it, let me say it differently. If I had not gone through Yale and heightened my visual perceptions, even though my—forget that. Heightened my visual perceptions, and if I had not also looked at so many paintings with my father, been visually highly tuned up visually, I'm sure that my experiences with dope in Aspen wouldn't have been as vivid. But it acted as a catalyst for me. The first time I turned on, I was in my studio with Marty and I had a lot of paintings along the wall. What happened was that the colors separated from one another, and they moved out into the room. I was absolutely—I mean, it was like the whole thing at Yale, where you said, "Is the tree in front of the house? You know, was the house in front of the mountain?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, all the spatial separations in Albers's color course, you know, where—does the red go back or does the green go back, and all that kind of thing. But this was like a vision in that the space was so clear. It was just—I never forgot it. It was really—it was literally like having a vision. I never spoke to Marty about this, because I assumed that this happened to everybody at the time. I later found out that this was not the case.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

VICTORIA BARR: That people said, "Are you sure that he didn't give you like, really, really watered-down LSD or mescaline or something like that?" And I said, "Yes, I am positive," because I trusted him.

Anyway, I also realized later that it was possible to at least make an attempt to re-create this spatial kind of vision without dope, and that I ultimately, after my time in Aspen, again took a stand of—I very soon realized that I did not want to get into any kind of dependency situation having to do with dope. That I felt that I could do it myself without.

But anyway, I wanted to say—I just wanted to say that this was a time of—this was a very hedonistic period in my life, and I loved it. And after I left it, I was in mourning for it for years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because I missed the people and the fun. It's not the same anymore. I think I left because I felt for my art that I should go. As for myself, I think that I would have been happy there for another year. But I knew—I knew somehow that I was becoming so isolated as an artist that I had to get out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: True, there are not many real other art people around. No galleries and no—

VICTORIA BARR: Not really, no. I mean, I had a show there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That was another thing. I had a show at Edward Kane Gallery, with Edward and Terry Kane, who were other friends. The show was a success. It was a very happy time. I got a lot of support from what other artists there were around. That was my second summer, so that would be the summer of '62 or the summer of '63. I can't remember—'62.

PAUL CUMMINGS: '62, yes. You know, one thing you have just glanced over and I want to go back to for a second. You said you had talked about many things with your father. Did you go to galleries with him?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Museum or—

VICTORIA BARR: Both. We used to do a lot of galleries together, pretty fast. We had a very good time doing them together. And we would play one game, which was—usually, we did—the game, we usually did it in a big exhibition in a museum, rather than in a gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The game was simply, which painting would you like to steal? I mean, it was just fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And then—but what was interesting and how I got my training from him—I mean, that is a strange way of putting it, but it is the case—is that I understood his taste. I learnt from him visually, not verbally.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I mean in the sense that I looked at so many works of art with him that I understood what he liked without his standing me in front of a painting and saying, "This is why I like this."

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: There was no verbal communication.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean, there must have been some indication, if you're looking at 10 paintings, a preference for these two or that one. There was?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, yes. I mean, I always—yeah. Oh, yes. He always stated his preference. I'm sorry. I didn't make that clear.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: He always stated his preference, and it became less and less of a surprise because I could sort of—I knew—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How would you describe it?

VICTORIA BARR: I can't. I can't. Except that I know that I still have that now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was an empathy, do you think, or just having learned something?

VICTORIA BARR: Learnt. It was learnt and it was intuition at the same time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And I think that I—I sort of went into that when I was a kid, because I always looked at exhibitions with my father. It wasn't just when I was an adolescent.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But would he sometimes say something about one picture or another or make comparisons? Would you discuss them? I mean, early on you might have done that. No? Or not?

VICTORIA BARR: The only time we discussed paintings at length—we had two—most of the time we did not, no. It was a nonverbal experience. And it was fast. So that now I can still do that. I still—except that I am not looking at art now the way I was then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, then I had a sort of way of being interested in everything that was my father's way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Now, I'm very selective about what I'm interested in. I resent it in a way because I feel cut off from what's going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What made the change?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, gosh.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The demands of painting?

VICTORIA BARR: Going off, just going off on my own. And finding that I have no particular alliance now with anybody whose work—this was very gradual, very gradual.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow, to get back to—that was the most exciting thing that I ever did with my father, was going around to galleries and exhibitions. We had an extremely good time when we did this and kind of understanding. I probably learnt more from him than from anybody else because that is still—that's still there. I hope that I've made it into my own. I don't know. You know, I'd have to think about that. Maybe in a later tape, we can talk about it some more, if I have further thoughts.

The thing is that it was so silent and so intuitive that I wouldn't know how to say it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I for years have had the feeling that your father was a rather silent man, anyway. Is that true?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he was very silent. Yes, he was. And so—although I must say that he had—I mean, he did talk intelligently and wrote. My God, wrote intelligently about works of art—he wrote with great difficulty. It was not easy for him. We did have one discussion. One of the more recent family acquisitions was—although I must say that if we went to see a dealer, if my father was going specifically to buy and not to see a show, but to buy out of the back room, I would sometimes go with him. He would consult me. He said, well, "Which do you think is the better one?" We would discuss what I liked, what he liked. And it was like, quotes, "man to man." It was great.

I'm sure that he was—well, by the time I was doing this, he was very—I think very confident. I feel that when I'm at my best, that I have that same kind of confidence. I think it's the only reason that I have been able to maintain myself as a painter through the very convoluted circumstances of my later life, that I have—I got from him this confidence, visual confidence. Although sometimes it's lapsed, sometimes I haven't been able to do what I wanted to do, that I have this. It's like a direct—some kind of direct visual channel through which I move. That's not a good way of describing it, but I don't know exactly how else to do it.

He pressed that on me. For instance, I'll give you an example. I went to choose—I made a trade last year with a friend. She had—this is with Jane Kaufman. She had about 30 paintings hanging on the wall. And I looked at the paintings. I had sort of seen them before in a very vague way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I looked at the paintings for five minutes, at the most, and I knew immediately what painting I wanted. There never is any question, or hardly ever. There are very few people around that I think are that knowledgeable in their judgment. I mean, I really think I know what I want and like. It's very exciting to have this ability.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: I feel very "un-lost."

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can read the whole thing immediately.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. There never seems to be—I mean, I really know what I like. The only thing is that sometimes now, I mean, new things do stun me and confuse me. There are certain areas that I'm not particularly interested in, so that it might take awhile for me to familiarize myself. I mean, I'm a painter. If there are things being made that aren't paintings, I may get a little confused or I simply may not be interested in them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's just another kind of activity.

VICTORIA BARR: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes. Now, to go back to Aspen a bit. You were there, what, about a year-and-a-half?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Straight through. And then you went—

VICTORIA BARR: To New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You came back to New York?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that was '62, '63 or so?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To do what? Anything?

VICTORIA BARR: I decided I had to come back to New York. I did this because, although I loved Aspen, I felt that it wasn't a good place for a painter. I was very lonely as a painter, felt that I always had to speak to almost everybody else on their own terms. Now I could do it. Then, I kind of ran out of steam after a year-and-a-half. Of course, I was right out of art school where everybody talked art all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I began to miss it, in a way and I could see—you know, I could see that this is not for me in the long run.

So I just wanted—I mean, I feel like talking about Aspen some more because it made—in many ways, it made a great influence on me. There was another person there called Chamberlain, Bob Chamberlain. He had a paperback bookstore, took good photographs every now and then, was a local Aspen person, and also had spent a lot of time in California. He had sailed from California to Tahiti, from California to Hawaii to Tahiti. During the time when I was there, he had been on these trips and come back. And he brought back with him beautiful photographs of the Tahitian people and landscape, of, you know, lush green, lush green with flowers and waterfalls—the photographs of Gauguin, you see what I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see, right.

VICTORIA BARR: In other words, I knew about Tahiti through Gauguin, but I had never seen any photographs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And how here were the photographs that updated.

VICTORIA BARR: Updated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: He was in love with Tahiti and was extremely romantic about it. And he used to cook, or he used to prepare raw fish. He had a Tahitian party where we had raw fish and wine. I was very taken by this. This was the beginning of my interest in the South Seas, which later shifted to Southeast Asia, which I separate from the South Seas because it's not Polynesian. You know, it's not that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, my highly romantic—again, rather hedonistic sensibility. We learnt how to dance the Tamure, which was the dance that was being danced in Tahiti, which was sort of like the hula. And the whole idea of sailing, you know, making great sailing voyages in rather small boats, was exciting to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you sail?

VICTORIA BARR: I have—I've known an awful lot of people who have sailed. I have bits of sailing when I was in Greece. I don't know exactly. But I find my life again and again involved with people who have sailed.

So anyway, Chamberlain influenced me to the extent—and I must tell a story. When I came back to New York that winter, I decided to try and get a Fulbright. I called the Fulbright office, and I said, "I would like to get a Fulbright to Tahiti." And they said, "Oh. But there is no university in Tahiti."

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, that was the end of that one. I couldn't seem to explain to them that I wanted to follow in the footsteps of Gauguin, ultimately, of Bob Chamberlain. But anyway, I'd still like to go to those islands, although I must say that I'm more interested in Asian. I should have gone then. I should have arranged a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When it was in blossom.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Because the second time I saw Chamberlain, meaning his second trip back, they had just put in the jet airstrip. He said that everything had changed within two weeks. So, you know.

But anyway, that, and then Joey Cabell, who was this surfing champion, made a great impression on me. He was Californian, but had grown up in Hawaii. The thing that was very interesting about him as a human being was that he was extremely quiet. I had heard about him from other skiers who said that he had skied very recklessly. He'd get up to the top of the mountain, point his skis down, and go. There was always in Aspen this thing about who had good form and who just skied wild, like Joey. And I never paid that much attention to him. But when he opened The Chart House—and this is how it ties in with Chamberlain—they used nautical charts to cover the tops of their tables. And then they put this—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Plastic, vinyl or something.

VICTORIA BARR: —plastic or vinyl or whatever it was on top so that the maps would not be destroyed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: They had a table with beautiful big shells—I mean, gigantic shells—in which there was salad that you could put together, all of which is now quite common. But I had never seen anything so beautiful before. I have always been very interested in maps, and the décor of this restaurant pleased me. And one day when they were just putting it together, I went in, and they were putting photographs up on the wall. I did not know then that Joey was a surfer or anything about him. I saw photographs of waves. They were the famous 40-foot-high waves off whatever beach in Hawaii. And there, you know, half-an-inch high, was Joey.

He had also a scrapbook, which he brought out very modestly, with photographs that defied belief, because what he did looked so highly dangerous and wildly dramatic. This ties in in the sense that—well, surfers and skiers, right? And it was before it was—the whole surfing thing had—you know, it was before the heavy drug thing of the '60s. It was before the heavy surfing thing of the '60s. It was like the avant garde of those particular activities. It was nice. It was very nice. It was very beautiful—a very beautiful idea for me to think of somebody, surfing on those enormous waves.

When that movie, *The Endless Summer*, came out, I went to see it a couple of times. I thought that it was very beautiful. And I think that it sort of ties in with my interest in dancing and movement. I wished, of course—what I wished, in a way, was that I had done that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I wish that I had gone up in California and I had been able to surf. I had done a lot of body surfing at Martha's Vineyard. But it's not the same.

But anyway, these—Joey and John influenced me in some way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think the physicality in those activities, in contrast to the painter's confined activity, was more, was interesting [Inaudible.]?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, very. It was. It was also that I felt some kind of companionship with them because I always saw painting as being fairly physical. But it wasn't. And it's funny. What they did, of course, was high-risk physical.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: What I did was, theoretically, high-risk creative. I mean, always pushing out towards the edge. I think that that's why I like skiers and surfers so much, was that they talked about their—when they weren't just doing the usual ski-bum number, when they got into things in a slightly different way, which they did every now and then, I would empathize with that kind of excitement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean?

VICTORIA BARR: That kind of, like skiing very, very hard, I could empathize with on a level of adventure, you

know, in painting. It's only that, of course, I would have liked to have been physically coordinated and courageous enough to do what they did. And I wasn't. I didn't have that frame of mind. But I felt in a certain sense quite at home with them more than they felt at home with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I think so. I have nothing but the best memories of that time, even though there was a great disparity between myself and many of the people that I knew. I had some—I mean, they were doing all sorts of things that I never knew anybody did before. They worked in Las Vegas. Some of them worked in Las Vegas and went down to Mexico. This is where they began. This is where—the skiers's summer was going to Mexico and just lying around on the beaches and doing dope. That had less appeal to me because it was more so purely hedonistic, and I didn't—Aspen, strangely enough, was not that decadent then. Mexico seemed to me to be much more decadent. Of course, there were much more desperate people in Mexico than there were in Aspen. I mean ex-patriots and like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I see.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, sort of *Under the Volcano*. Oh, the ultimate books about Mexico.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is it? I don't know that one.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes, you must read it. It's good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So anyway, you had come back. But in '63 to New York?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, yeah, February.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kind of put things back with the world again.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tune in on the—

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Madison Avenue.

VICTORIA BARR: —getting back to New York. Worked for Steven Spector as a kind of helper, secretary. There wasn't too much to do; it was a nice part-time job. He dealt in Old Master drawings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He was living where then?

VICTORIA BARR: Seventy-first and 64th Street, then on 72nd Street in that new—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tower. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: —building. It was a job. I had an apartment. I painted. It was a difficult winter. It was very difficult coming back to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason? I mean, the adjustment to life here in the city and the noise?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Isolation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were isolated in Aspen.

VICTORIA BARR: Not the same way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I was in the sense that I was an anomaly. But I had many friends there. Here in New York, I didn't. That made a great difference. That was really—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find Spector? How did you get involved?

VICTORIA BARR: I knew him from Yale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you like working with Old Master drawings? Did it mean anything?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or was it just something to do with—

VICTORIA BARR: It didn't mean anything. Of course, I would rather have worked with Old Master drawings than a hell of a lot of other things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It had no great meaning for me. I did not learn a great deal. It was a job that would not wear me out. I was already primed to try and work always at a job that would not undo me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I went down to Washington a lot that winter. I had a friend who was working on the *Washington Post* called Lee Lescaze, boyfriend. And he was the son of William Lescaze who built that famous building in Philadelphia. I can't remember what it was called. But anyway, he was still alive. Both his parents were still alive, Lee Lescaze's parents.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Lee had majored in Chinese at Harvard and was unable at that time to get any kind of job having to do with China, although I think subsequently he's been out there, perhaps as a journalist; perhaps not. I don't know. I keep looking for his name every now and then at times, and I've never seen it. But anyway, that summer I went to spend the summer in Copenhagen with a friend of mine, Betty Corzan.

[END OF REEL 2 SIDE B.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is saying this is side five, and it is the 26th of January 1977, Paul Cummings talking to Victoria Barr in her studio, New York City, on 14th Street.

Anyway, you said you wanted to recapitulate on a couple of topics we have discussed.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I did. I just—I know we were discussing Aspen last time. I just wanted to say one thing, one thing again, about Aspen, which was very, very interesting at that time, and as a sort of a recap to give a feeling of the time. That was that when I was there, again, it was 1960, from the spring of 1961 until the fall of 1962. There was this feeling still for the past, because there were so many people living in Aspen who had come right after the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, the earlier people. You've talked about the earlier people and the later people.

VICTORIA BARR: The later people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The development of the city.

VICTORIA BARR: And the whole mixture of that period so that you could find out directly what it was like after the war and the very beginnings of the sort of revitalization of Aspen. At the same time, although we didn't realize it then because it was just the early '60s, there were the beginnings of a kind of openness. I remember talking about drugs in Aspen, which was a relatively innocent situation, which was very open.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, were those local people, or were they people who had come into Aspen?

VICTORIA BARR: Both.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Both.

VICTORIA BARR: Both of them. A sort of—the very, very beginnings of the sort of—I mean, in a sense, Aspen always had its contingent of hippies. But they were not very flamboyant, not the way they were in the late '60s.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were poor hippies.

VICTORIA BARR: They were poor hippies, and they lived in cabins that used to belong to silver miners.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: They were known. They were nicknamed "woodsies." But they did exist then, and there were many ski bums who were quite poor at that time. But nevertheless, there were the sort of seeds of the '60s, not in the sense of any of the political movements except for a great sense of freedom. It was a very, very free place

at the time. That freedom was soon to go. And the law and order element in Aspen would become much stronger.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did that appeal to you?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it was marvelous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think it appealed to everybody. I think I lucked out. I mean, I think I was in Aspen in one of its great moments. Because later there was a sort of hippie influx in Aspen that was much more noticeable and Aspen really turned its back on that. But this was not the case at the time.

Then the other thing I wanted to say about Aspen was that it was the only place that I have lived in my life where I had a sense of how a town worked and where I was interested, because I would go and have dinner with somebody who was a friend who was also involved with the government at the time and with the zoning. They were becoming ecologically conscious in the early '60s. I mean, it wasn't a disaster in any way. But they were thinking about that. I saw that it was possible for people that I knew as human beings and not just people that I read about in the newspaper to exercise power in a hopeful way, about the way in which they wished to live and that it was possible to do that. That was also very interesting. The whole concept of government was much less abstract to me for the first time. So that's the end of Aspen, really. I just wanted to say those two things.

Then I also on an earlier tape mentioned that at the end of the summer of 1952, when I was 14, I joined my family in the south of France, after having been in England. This is the moment when my father was working both with Picasso and Matisse and I mentioned that I had met them both, and also met Chagall. Although these meetings were extremely brief, I just wanted to mention that, vis a vis Picasso. The museum in Antibes, I believe was open and we went to see it. Very shortly after that, Picasso painted *A Night's Fishing in Antibes* [1939], I think. And my father bought that painting for the Museum of Modern Art.

It held particular interest for me because earlier that summer we had been in Taormina in Sicily, and there had been a lot of night fishing then. It was very beautiful to look out over the water and see all the little lights off the boats and everything. I remember later, going through the Museum of Modern Art with my father, and looking at this painting and remembering how beautiful it was to see the fishing boats in the water at night. That's an image that I remember very, very clearly.

In *A Night's Fishing in Antibes*, you see the museum. You see the point of land with the buildings at the museum at one side. We went to have lunch with Picasso when I was with my parents, and we went to see him. They went separately from me during that period, but when I went along, we had lunch. And he was in La Californi, I think, except that I am confused. I know that we went to Vallauris, which I think is just above Cannes; maybe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've forgotten.

VICTORIA BARR: I've forgotten, too. It might not be. But anyway, we went into a big villa, which I assume is La Californi. Picasso was working on a lot of pottery at that time. And as is known very well now, he would fill up one room after another with his works, no matter what they were. He took us through these rooms and he'd sort of open the door, and there would be this sea of pottery. And then we'd walk along the edge of the room and out the other side and into another room.

Anyway, he was there, and my memories, I think, are probably very similar to a lot of other people's. His eyes were extremely brilliant, brilliant black and he was quite animated. We then went down into the town and had lunch with him. And visiting him was impressed upon me by my parents as being a very important occasion. I mean, I knew I was—I knew already—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Prepared.

VICTORIA BARR: —that I was prepared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Then when we went to see Matisse when I was taken along—and again, my father worked with him separately during that period. But Matisse was in Nice in Hotel De Ville up above the town. I can remember going into the sort of set of very large rooms, which might have been a series of apartments strung together. It seemed very big to me at the time. I don't know whether it would anymore. It was all—there was very little furniture, if any, and all painted a sort of brilliant white. Of course, it was terribly sunny so that I remember all this white. He had the papier collé works up on the wall. He was bedridden by that time and we were shown into his bedroom by his very loyal assistant, a woman whose name I don't remember, but is easily found.

He was sitting in bed. And again, it's strange because I have seen so many photographs of him in the situation in which we also found him that I simply will say that he was sitting in bed and he had pillows in back of him and he had a large bed tray across his lap. And he had three cats, which of course, I was able to communicate with very easily at that age.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Because, I mean, again, I was there as a visitor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I felt that I should keep quiet because, after all, my father had to do work that day also. In the bedroom, across from the bed, there was a papier collé that Matisse was working on at the time. He had those very, very long sticks, which I believe had brushes on the end, so that he could work from his bed. He could work on the wall across the room. The room was not very wide. Anyway, his work impressed me more. I mean—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: From the point—just in every way. The sort of beautiful kind of graphic quality of the cut-outs, the colors he used. I was just—I can't say anything more except that I felt that I understood it, that it had a visual meaning for me in a way that Picasso's work didn't. Except the *Night Fishing*. But I warmed up more to Matisse at that time. It was only very much later in my life that I began to understand Picasso. Also, because I was already then very involved with color. So, Matisse made great sense to me on that level.

The chapel in Vons, which we also went to see, was not yet completed. I remember that my father—I think that what Matisse was doing was, he either had just completed the designs for the windows or he had—or he was still working on them. But when my father visited him then, what he did was to buy a set of chasubles, of completed chasubles for the museum. And the original set—I believe the original set of—I don't know what to call them, maquettes or whatever, for the design of the chasubles.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The pattern.

VICTORIA BARR: The patterns, right. And Matisse had some postcards that were made up already. Each one of them had a design for a chasuble on it. I still have those postcards now. But these occasions made great sense to me, and as I talk about them now, I do remember—it's almost as if I remember the art more clearly than I remember the individual. But they were very important occasions to me, which were then followed up by the arrival of the chasubles at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I remember going down and looking at them with my father and talking about them and everything. So anyway, Matisse to me seemed rather serious, whereas in fact, when I think about it now, it was much more easy or much more comprehensible for me to—as a young person to make contact with Picasso. I mean, he was more animated and everything. Matisse was really very quiet and very serious. I think that mostly probably what I did was just sit there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was never as playful as Picasso.

VICTORIA BARR: No, not at all. Not so extroverted. I mean, I guess Picasso was probably "on," most of the time. But Chagall was the person that I found most sympathetic as a personality. I mean, these memories are very, very distant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know what intrigues me is that—now, you said you were prepared to see these people. You obviously knew who they were, because their names were around. But what do you mean by that, that your parents suggested you do this or don't do that, or what you should look for or what you should pay attention to?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, let me just say that my father had written, I believe—well, I know he had finished *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* [Alfred Barr Jr.; New York: Museum of Modern Art: 1939], maybe *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* [Alfred Barr Jr.; New York: Simon and Schuster: 1946]. Anyway, it doesn't matter which edition. The fact is that he had finished that book and that I had been around for that period. Picasso figured tremendously in both my parents' lives. My mother helped my father talk to both Matisse and Picasso.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, because your father doesn't know French.

VICTORIA BARR: He doesn't speak any foreign languages, at least not fluently, not as fluently as he would have needed or liked to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, I knew that there was a tremendous amount of concern over these two artists, much less about Chagall. I knew a lot of the work of both of them, or at least I thought I did. I certainly had been exposed to quite a lot of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Now, I think it's not quite the case, but I felt that I knew a lot.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I certainly knew more than most people my age. Prepared in the sense, I suppose, that now, I was finally going to meet the people who had made these works of art that my father had been so concerned about. I mean, Matisse and Picasso were terribly important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they were his main interests.

VICTORIA BARR: Concerns, right, yes. This was 1952. So his interests had not been so strongly involved with American painting as they would be subsequently. So, this was the sort of—and after all, Picasso, I believe I can say without any hesitation, was considered the greatest living artist of the time. So that I knew—I mean, in that sense I was prepared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you think, I mean, if you can remember? When you finally got there, I mean, here you were in the building, in these apartments that you had seen photographs of and heard about and your parents had talked about the people so often—what did it mean to you? I mean, here was Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, names that everybody knows in a certain way. Was it—what?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, probably it meant a lot more to me than I still can tell now. I mean, I think that it probably made an impression. But the fact is that the impression was made already in my childhood. And in a sense, meeting them was a normal thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you had met lots of artists.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, not so many, actually.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: That's the thing. Not really so many.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I thought you would have met more over the years.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I have. I mean, I can tell you some of the people that I have met. In fact, I'll tell you now since we've gotten into that. I mean, I knew Sandy Calder and Peter Blum. And I subsequently met Marino Marini and another Italian called Cheloya. These are all early, early memories. Ben Shahn.

But my father really didn't socialize with artists the way his friend Jim Soby did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: He didn't have an active social life with them. So that I didn't meet as many artists as you might imagine. Later in my life, I did. I mean, for instance, I met or knew—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Later meaning when? Five years? Ten years?

VICTORIA BARR: Later when I was a young adult. Let me see. When did I really begin to meet people, in conjunction with my father or because I was my father's daughter, I had access to them. I mean, for instance, I knew Rothko. I mean, I didn't meet Rothko; I knew Rothko. Then much later, I got to know Jack Tworkov in Provincetown. That's quite recently; that's in the '70s. And Fritz Bultman, and at Yale, I mean—people that I met other than Neil. I mean, the people that I've mentioned, Alex Katz, Jim Brooks.

I'm jumping all over the place in time now. But I mean, I've met de Kooning. I got to know Louise Nevelson, who is a real friend of mine. And then lots of people who were sort of closer to my age, like Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg, Jim Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg, you know all that, the sort of last generation that knew my father. But that's much later, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did it mean to you as a young artist, though, to meet these people?

VICTORIA BARR: I felt like I was meeting another artist. I know this sounds funny. I mean, when I met Sandy Calder I was so young that I got scared in his studio, because there was a big—oh, I also met Lipchitz. That's another person I met, and Matta, I also knew, who gave me a beautiful, beautiful drawing that was sort of like a triptych that opened up, and which I still love and feel that it influenced me in some way. So Matta was another very early memory. But that's all, just—I later re-met him in Paris. And I went up to him and I said "Oh, you know."

But I obviously felt that I understood them on the level of being an artist, even though I've never thought of that until now. I felt that when I was there I had to be polite and mostly what that meant was that I had to be quiet.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

VICTORIA BARR: But there was plenty to look at. I just wanted to finish up this small sequence by saying that we also went to visit Chagall. I believe that Chagall might have lived very near Vence at that time. But anyway, he lived in a beautiful, smaller villa. There was a main room in it with a balcony that seemed to go around the room. The inside of this was very—it had a very warm feeling to it. I suppose—I can't remember, but I have the sense, that there were probably some beautiful plants and lots of furniture and probably some beautiful rugs. It was very elegant and warm, I would say. And I don't mean elegant in the sort of classic sense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think it was probably fairly chaotic. I can picture a couch with lots of pillows on it and stuff like that—comfortable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway, it seems to me that we might have had lunch with him there, although I don't recall. I do know that we met with him twice. And the second time, he came down to Cap d'Antibes, and we all went swimming together. As I like to swim a great deal and was very involved with water, with the night fishing stuff and swimming underwater and seeing the Mediterranean for the first time in my life, that brilliant blue-green and all of that, you know, swimming with Chagall [laughs]also made sense. It was a way that a young person could connect. So anyway, those are my memories of these encounters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Again, while we were in Europe, I'd like to tell you of a brief meeting that I had with Bernard Berenson. And the reason I want to do this is twofold. One, because he was one of the great art historians of a certain period and also because I think that, as my parents wished me to meet, say, Picasso, my mother also understood—I think it has to do with her sense of history and the fact that she is and was an art historian, was Italian, and that even though this was to be an even more brief encounter with a much less accessible person, as far as I was concerned, that she made the effort; also because she wanted Berenson to meet me because she had known him for a very long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway, we went, my mother, myself, Ruth Washburn, who was married to Gordon Washburn. And I don't know where they were working at that time, whether it was in Providence or upstate New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In '51?

VICTORIA BARR: Or Carnegie.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Carnegie, Carnegie, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, Gordon was not there. But his son Derrick, with whom I had gone to school, was there and another classmate of ours, and Fanny, who was Derrick's younger sister. And we were taken. We were spending part of the summer in Forte dei Marmi, and we drove into Florence, and, in our best clothes, we are taken to have tea with Bebe [ph]. And we went to I Tatti, and we were shown around by Nicky Mariano, Bebe's assistant. I can't say that this meeting had direct personal meaning for me, other than the context that I've just spoken about. But on the other hand, my family had this division between Modern Art and the more traditional, particularly the Renaissance Italian art and everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I knew already then—I mean, after all, I was age 17—I knew a lot of art historians, some of

whom, after Berenson died, would go and, shall we say, preside over I Tatti.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I know it to be a great center for art history and that many people have gone there and written there and studied there and everything. In a sense, in that sense it made sense to me and it already did then, probably more sense then than it does now because now I'm not very academically oriented and not very involved with Italian art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Whereas then we looked at a lot of things. In Florence, we went to Pisa. So anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it was a fairly early introduction to lots of things.

VICTORIA BARR: Lots and lots of things. And I was very, very open to it at that time and saw—I mean, I could at a later time make up a list of works of art that I have seen throughout Italy and the towns that I've been to, because I realize that I really knew that country inside-out at a certain time. No longer now, but I did then, and later, in subsequent trips.

But anyway, we did do that. When we—we went to Florence several times that summer. And we stayed with Philippa Offner, who was the wife of Offner of NYU.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: She had a beautiful apartment that was adjacent to the Boboli Gardens. I can remember going out into these gardens and walking around. It was nice staying there. She was a very nice person to stay with and I liked it. I liked Florence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was the Berenson experience like? What was it, just tea for an hour or something?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] He was very old.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yep and his age made a barrier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I just—you know, I'm just kind of describing what happened on a personal level.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you think of the whole place, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it was a beautiful villa.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was the establishment then.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it was a beautiful—yes, it was. I had heard about Berenson for years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And my mother had corresponded with him, and I also knew that there was a certain tension in the family because I think Berenson did not get along with my father, although I'm not sure about this. I would have to check again with my mother. But there was a certain amount of tension between the traditional art historians and my father. So—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Still is—

VICTORIA BARR: Still is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —between art historians of different—

VICTORIA BARR: Of different periods, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —generations.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I think also different generations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. Absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: But Berenson's books were being used. I mean, I went to Radcliffe that fall. Berenson's books were being used in the art history courses and everything. I mean, he was a living art historian, and then I went to Mrs. Gardner's. I had already been to Mrs. Gardner's because of having been at Milton. I had been through and seen Mrs. Gardner's, and I knew that Berenson had helped her select the works of art that she had in her palace, so to speak. That made sense to me. There was a context for this already.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Very much so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: The people that I knew at that time, the art historians that I knew who were friends of my mother's, and sometimes friends of my father's, were, for instance, Sydney Freedberg, who was a very close friend of my mother's and that I had known since childhood, and Millard Meiss. My mother was very friendly both with Meiss and with his wife Miggy, who was the sister of—last known as Aline Saarien, who was married to Saarien the architect.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So that we were—I knew and liked Aline. I knew Aline, she was one of the people that I knew when I was a child and had known her in various stages of her life and gotten along very well with her.

Then John McAndrew, who I've mentioned already, and his wife Betty—he was teaching for years at Wellesley, after having been in the architecture department at the museum. There were various other art historians that—like Wittkower and some other people that I knew less well. But I'm only mentioning the people that I really knew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I get a feeling, as you talk about this, that your mother had quite a substantial circle that was different from your father's world.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, she did and she kept that up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was a certain percentage of overlap, but there was independence.

VICTORIA BARR: And there was a certain percentage of separate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. Now, for instance, in the overlap, except this is not an art historian, is Aline Saarien. I mean, Aline was a friend for years and there was no—there was no separateness there at all. In fact, while I'm on it, since I want to also tell you about my life with Philip Johnson, I will just say, since I've mentioned Aline, that at a certain moment, I did—after I had been at Yale, I went to Detroit for, I believe, my cousin Elsa's wedding. I can't give you the date on this. But let's make it, I don't know, somewhere between '59 and '63, somewhere in there.

Aline was married at that time to Saarien, and they were living in Bloomfield Hills. We went out to visit them. And the reason I think that it might have been after '61, which is when I visited, when I graduated from Yale, was the fact that Saarien was designing a big dormitory for Yale. I remember—now, this I remember. By that time I was, shall we say, allowed to talk, and I remember having a very heated discussion with him.

The models were already built and we went to his office. We looked at the models and I saw that the windows in the dormitories were slits. They actually seemed to fit into the context of the design very well, as they might have. But the fact was that—and this I came up against again and again, was that since students spend a lot of time in their rooms working, and they have to live there and their quarters were, by necessity, cramped, I said to him, "They need more windows. They need more light. They need a situation where they"—I remember at Harvard there used to be windows that had window seats built into them, where you could sit and look out and this was very pleasant. I mean, often, student rooms were pretty lean.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I kept saying to him, "You've got to make the windows bigger." This was a real bone of contention between us. Needless to say, I do not think that I made much of an impression on him.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I felt that I had said how I felt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good.

VICTORIA BARR: That was a very nice visit. It was—I had been in lots of architects' offices by then. I could understand models and all of that. And it was nice to see Aline again, whom I hadn't seen in awhile. So anyway, that's just a little—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aside.

VICTORIA BARR: —aside.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what about Sylvie and Philip Johnson and Vincent Scully and all his crowd?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, right, right. Okay. Well, that, let's begin with Philip because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's obviously the longest.

VICTORIA BARR: The longest relationship. And I believe that my parents knew Philip before I was born. I always remembered Philip being around. My very first memory of, not Philip, because I don't have a first memory of Philip, since he was always there. But my first memory of his buildings was that when I was about six, I went to camp. This was on Cape Cod. After camp, my mother came to pick me up and we went to Boston. I'm getting confused. So let's cut out the camp. That's wrong.

We went to Boston sometime while the war was still on. I also could have been around five or six. She and I stayed together in the house that Philip built as his architectural project when he was an architect at Harvard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this the house with the wall in front and everything?

VICTORIA BARR: It's the house with the beautiful wall that's made out of—I believe out of sticks of wood. It doesn't go all the way down to the ground, so that there was a space of about six inches between the gravel of the yard—the yard was gravel. You could see people's feet as they walked by, and dogs and everything, and of course, for age five or six, this was extremely interesting.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was beautiful. I loved it. I took to it instantly and we had a very good time. I won't go into the details. Philip was not there. But it was Easter time and it was terrific. It was fun. I already knew Philip, so staying there made sense to me, even at that early age.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Even without him there?

VICTORIA BARR: Even without him there. I think that he might have been—I don't know where he was. Anyway, then imagine always that Philip is there, meaning that I knew him. The first time that I went to New Canaan, I remember that Philip was thinking of building a house for himself. So we went *au famille* with Philip to look at the site. Nothing had been done, so that we were on Ponus Ridge Road, where the Glass House was ultimately built, and we looked down this rather steep embankment, or hill really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean it was a big hill; trees, trees, trees. That was it. Then we went back again, and the bulldozers had gone to work. They had flattened the land where the Glass House is now, and where the guest house was to be, and the swimming pool.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So there was dirt, just woods and dirt. Then—so in fact, what happened was, I witnessed the entire building of everything that was there. It was exciting and of course, this includes the landscaping, which he changed and changed. And it includes putting up the Kiesler sculpture and I think maybe taking it down and purchasing the Lipchitz, placing it, the purchase of the Poussin, the damage of the Poussin. Then Philip put in a Kline instead, and it didn't work. My friends Helen and Piero Menoni restored the Poussin. I probably shouldn't be saying this, but anyway, I did. So.

The guest house—interestingly enough, one of my early memories of the guest house, and again, this is a childhood memory now, is that this bear rug on the floor here was in the main room of the guest house before

the ceiling, before the false ceiling was put in, before that period when Philip put in the false ceiling and put in the gazebo, gazebo thing down below.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So this bear rug was in there and I really loved it.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: That was marvelous. I loved it so much and made such a fuss over it every time we went out. We used to go out for Sunday lunch. That was the big deal. We'd take the train out and go out and eat lunch. And I'll tell you some of the people who were there and everything in a minute. But anyway, when Philip changed that guest room around and put in the false ceiling with the arches and everything, he called—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The guest house, you mean?

VICTORIA BARR: The brick house, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: He called my mother and said, "I don't want the bear rug anymore. Do you think Tori would like it?" So to this day now, in 1976, I have Philip's Kodiak bear rug on my floor, that I love.

[They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

VICTORIA BARR: It's very funny how few people ever—it's amazing how few people ever ask me about the people that I know or the people that I've met. But last year there was an architect in here by the name of Frank Williams. We were talking about the possibility of doing something with my loft, which I decided not to do. But anyway, at a certain moment, he looked at that rug, and he said, "Tori, where did you get that rug?" I was so amazed. I mean, it was in fact an idle question. It was not a leading question of any kind. And I looked at him, and I said, "Well, Frank, you know, you must have some kind of sixth sense, because it comes from Philip."

But anyhow, we watched—all of us—the development of—I don't know what to say, you know, everything, everything. All of the questions about the heating, how the place would be heated, the fireplace, the bathroom, whether the kitchen worked or didn't work, the debate about, would it be livable for other people? Which was a debate that I think we agreed across the board was extremely annoying. It was—you know, there was always this thing of, "Oh, well, it's not practical." The kitchen—look, in order to make a meal you have to open up the top of this set of—it was like a set of cabinets mysterious cabinets that were like a discrete block on one end of the Glass House. Inside, you found everything, the sink, the stove, et cetera, et cetera.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: People would always come and say, "Well, that's fine for one person, but if you have a family"—and we always used to laugh because the fact is that it was extraordinarily beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you think it would ever work as a house, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Absolutely. Totally, completely, I think it's one of the best things he ever built. There's no doubt about it that it worked perfectly for him, for his lifestyle, and he built it for himself. I still love it. I still feel inspired when I go there. I now think that it is even more beautiful. Then, I took it for granted. It was part of the family. Philip was really part of the family and I felt that he was like an uncle. Now, I see it not totally objectively, but I see how—I mean, if I were to be able to live there for awhile, I would do it. I would think that it would be a very life-enhancing experience, very visually extraordinary.

I can just give you some examples, of sitting and listening to music and always looking out the window. That was one of the things, constantly looking out the window.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How can you not look out the window?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, why would anybody not want to look out the window? That's the way I felt. You can't, except that he—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's all there is there, really.

VICTORIA BARR: He has curtains that slide.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Like sliding, thin sliding panels that are curtains, though. I like to look out the window, you see, so that I can't ever imagine a moment when I wouldn't like to look out the window. Of course, when it's dark, the trees are lit. But if they're not lit, then you don't look out the window. I mean, you see shadows.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Watching snow fall. Watching it get dark. Looking at the landscape at night, where the colors are really so different. The trees were lit way, way down below and way above also, except there were very few trees above the house. But then looking at a corner where you would see shadows, shadows of a landscape reflected in the glass so that you had a sort of double of the thing, all of which would interest me much more now than it did then.

Then I did it in this sort of unconscious way. Now I would like to go do it in a much more conscious way. It could be very, very serene. I feel that often, although I can't exactly pull examples out of a hat right now, that the houses that architects build for themselves, if they have the money to do it, can be among their most successful works, because I think that they are their own client. So that they can have a kind of freedom and a kind of intensity, vis a vis their own needs.

No, it would not be livable for a family. I would not like to have to deal with all the cooking and everything. Although I can't say that I would refuse. It might be worth it. I really feel very strongly about that place.

Philip was very friendly with all of us. He was very interested in what was going on with younger people and we used to talk about Yale. When he came to Yale to talk, we used to see each other. He was interested, but his mind worked very, very fast, and he was difficult for me to talk to and difficult to talk to. Somehow he would change the subject. Conversation never flowed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like a shotgun, Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. And that made it disruptive in some way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That's true.

VICTORIA BARR: And not terribly intimate, which was too bad. But—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he's not that kind of a personality.

VICTORIA BARR: No, he's not. He's not. But nevertheless, he kept in contact with the schools, at the time when I was at Yale and when I was at Radcliffe and when I was at Milton, with the issues. He would always say, "What's going on?" You know, I felt, in a sense, included, on that level. We did all these Sunday lunches and then students would come from Yale to visit. Then he built the big wall along Ponus Ridge Road, and we would see heads coming up over the wall, staring down at the house. It was a certain lack of privacy, I must say. But he enjoyed it. You know, he, again, sort of showing people around. He liked to have students around. They come after lunch, and he would show them around and everything. I often went out there with friends, and he was very hospitable to them. I tell you, it was fun. It was lots of fun.

He sometimes—well, it was one time when Frank Lloyd Wright came to visit. There was a certain amount of chuckles going on about that, because of course, that architecturally speaking they were tremendously opposed.

[They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my word.

VICTORIA BARR: Philip had some little model cars, old-fashioned model cars. They were very small.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, like those miniatures?

VICTORIA BARR: They were miniature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And Frank Lloyd Wright and Philip played with these cars on the counter, which underneath was the kitchen. [Laughs.] I remember that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Frank Lloyd Wright had on his hat. He had on his hat. I don't believe I really said anything to him, but there he was, another architect. I subsequently—I mean, I've been all through the Robie House in Chicago. Frank Lloyd Wright made sense. And of course, then he built that travesty for painting, the Guggenheim Museum. Great for people, terrible for painters.

[They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's what he wanted to do.

VICTORIA BARR: That's what he wanted to do, exactly. Then I was also around at the time when Philip and Mies van der Rohe were working on the Seagram Building together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The person who was the sort of catalyst in terms of financing and sort of the catalyst between Seagram, the Seagram family and Philip and Mies, was Phyllis Lambert. She was around a lot at that time and we all became very friendly with her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She's in Chicago, or something, isn't she?

VICTORIA BARR: She's now either still in Canada or in Chicago. Then when I was at Yale, she went to Yale. She went to the architecture school at Yale after the Seagram Building was built.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. So anyway, we spent a lot of time. John Homes was there for a long time when I was young-ish. He now works for Peggy Guggenheim in Venice. I re-saw him again when I was in Paris on a Fulbright. He was living in Paris then. We were very, very friendly and liked one another.

David Whitney I met when I was at Yale, and he was just finishing up with Rhode Island School of Design, and we became very close. He and I had a great deal to talk about. Of course, I was older then.

But anyway, Phillip's sister was there, and Theodate Johnson and her husband, Scott. It really was like a family. We spent Christmases, Thanksgivings, Easters year after year. It was a very—it was great.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting because in a way you kind of provided a family for him.

VICTORIA BARR: In a sense, we did. Of course, I didn't know that then. I really didn't know that. I didn't see. I never even thought of that, not now, even.

But anyway, the other person that I met at that time, who used to come over and visit, was John Johansen. I think I must have met him when I was about 16, maybe even younger. He was working in New Canaan, building in New Canaan. I became friendly with him separately from my parents and Philip and everything, later, much later. And I still am today. I see him very often, whereas I don't see Philip very much anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who does, anymore? I mean, he's always—

VICTORIA BARR: Well, he's traveling a lot, for one. He's been building all over the world, in India and Texas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The other part of the world.

VICTORIA BARR: All over the world—[They laugh.] the other part of the world, right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow. All seasons of the year, and of course, we watched the seasons change. Swam in the swimming pool late in September, swam in it as early as possible in the spring and into the summer, if we happened to be around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what do you think of Philip's little museum/gallery/storehouse, whatever he calls it, in the hill there?

VICTORIA BARR: I am not crazy about the painting building, where the paintings—where you can turn walls.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think that it would be successful if it had another room adjoining it where you could go in and see more paintings hanging in a more conventional setting, where you didn't constantly sort of have to turn the walls like you would the pages of a book. It's an interesting idea, and I think that Philip has used that, used that property to work out ideas which he has probably then carried out in a more successful way in a bigger context

in other places. I know he has designed a lot of museums since that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just heard about one today.

VICTORIA BARR: I'd like to continue with Philip. I just wanted to say a few things, a few intimate things about life there. First of all, for a long time there was a dog. The dog was a *Kaiser hund*, which is a Dutch barge dog and looks a little bit like a Chow, except prettier. And this dog was a sort of faithful dog and never left the property, because its quality was that it would never leave the barge on the canals in Holland. It was a Kaiser—Kaiser, I think, means "cheese." It was the dog that guarded the barges that had the cheese.

So there was a *Kaiser hund*. There was always this bone of contention about the dog, because my parents and myself at that time really preferred cats. And my mother was always trying to persuade Philip to get a cat, which he never did. But anyway, the *Kaiser hund* turned out to be very sweet and was nicknamed the Pussydog because it was so cat-like in its habits that it sort of passed the Barr test.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was a very nice animal. I mean, it was not exactly a major character. But as you said, it was a family in a way. It was a family.

Then I remember also that Philip had very beautiful sweaters. When we went to have lunch there, we always got a little bit dressed up. Philip would greet us, and I remember that he had a beautiful, very plain pullover that was a marvelous red, tending a little bit towards crimson, but not much. Then he had the same pullover in orange. It was beautiful to look at.

Then I also remember—and this is a very late memory of David introducing Philip to the Beach Boys when the Beach Boys were singing I'm getting "Good Vibrations." This is a song that I also happen to like very much, and I think, you know, in the history of pop music it's a pretty important song, on a certain level. So I was not around at that time, but I have in my imagination—you know, "I'm getting good vibrations" echoing through the Glass House. Philip really always wanted to know what was going on, even though he was an aristocrat.

So those are just a few memories, intimate memories.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did he meet David?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I can give you some idea.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Roughly?

VICTORIA BARR: Late '50s, early '60s.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And I don't know how. I have no idea.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, did he come into this whole thing?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He did?

VICTORIA BARR: Later, then, he did. Yes, then he did. We got—you know, we just got along very, very well because we were both art students. So—well, that doesn't mean that we got along well, but we did, as it turned out. That was terrific.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: That's about all that I can think of about Philip right now.

I also wanted to tell you a few stories about staying with Peggy Guggenheim, which I haven't mentioned.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Okay.

[END REEL 3 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 6.

Did you want to talk us about Peggy or Vincent Scully? He fits in there first of all, doesn't he? And Sobey?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yes, well. Yes, why don't I? And Jim Sobey, of course, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because that kind of finishes off that kind of picture.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, right, exactly. Jim Sobey, another great friend like Philip, moved to New Canaan to Brushy Ridge Road to a big, big house that had a portico in front that made it look like a Southern mansion.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it wasn't.

VICTORIA BARR: It wasn't, and it was not, frankly, on the outside as beautiful as some of the photographs of Southern mansions I've seen, but it was very strange with this huge portico, piers in front. Anyway, that didn't matter because it was the inside that mattered. And of course, the reason the inside mattered so much was that he had his collection. His painting collection seemed to me to be far more important than the pieces of sculpture that had on a very big lawn on the outside.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Since I've started by talking about his house, I'll just say that some of the paintings were there. Some of the paintings were bought during the time in which he was in New Canaan. Now, I know that we—of course, my parents knew him before that. I don't remember, though. My first memory of Jim was really through his son, Peter, who had a birthday party in New York. I must have been about 11. And there were butterballs on each butter plate. We had butter knives, and we got the butterballs and used the butter knives like catapults and splatted them on the walls.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are you serious?

VICTORIA BARR: It was great. I don't remember what happened that night. I don't have any recollection of Jim or his wife Nelly. But anyway, eventually he did show up in New Canaan. I was quite a lot older.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And no butterballs.

VICTORIA BARR: There were no butterballs. That era was long gone.

So anyhow, the house had, for instance, the de Chiricos. As I was influenced by the paintings in my parents' house, which I must enumerate for you at another moment, so I was influenced by the works of art that were at Jim's. de Chiricos and beautiful Miró, beautiful yellow and green Miró.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The best de Chiricos. And he also, eventually, acquired a Francis Bacon, a good Francis Bacon, a good early, dry Francis Bacon. That's my definition of a good Francis Bacon, before they got so excessively slick and painterly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Which intrinsically doesn't bother me. I just don't think they are felt anymore, and that's the real problem, which is really a shame.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It hasn't been 20 years, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: It's really a shame because, boy, they were sinister. Oh, we really—they were really something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I think—it's funny. I was looking at one recently. I think the one the Modern has with a dog skiing down the side of the Twenty-One Building.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'd remembered seeing those in London 20 or whatever years ago. And they really make me question the use of an excessively dramatic image in a painting, where it is the image rather than the painting or the form that is what it's all about. It just gets very boring after awhile.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The initial shock or the initial view you have, though, is one thing. And then it seems to disappear.

VICTORIA BARR: I never—I never had that kind of experience that you're talking about. I never felt that they—that the image did disappear. I only felt what I said before. I mean, for instance, when Bacon had that show at the Met, that I wanted so badly to have them have the same kind of emotional impact, considering the other kinds of art that are being made or were being made when those paintings were being made.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That, after all, that kind of—well, that kind of emotional complexity is certainly viable, as viable as, let's say, a Ken Noland, you know. But the fact is that, as we said, we just discussed, they were not felt. And it made it very—it was very empty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And sad. Real, real sad. You know, what a shame.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you visit Sobey so much? Or was he in New York?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. We did. When he was in New Canaan, we did visit him a lot. We used to go to Philip's, and then we'd go to Sobey's. Sometimes we'd go to Sobey's and we'd have a drink at Philip's. Sometimes we'd go to Philip's and Sobey would come over. We'd all go to Sobey's for a drink and then go back for lunch at Philip's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did Philip do lunch at his house for all those people?

VICTORIA BARR: Philip had servants. They lived in a white house by the driveway, which I don't know what he does now. But anyway, Scott and Theaday, his sister and brother-in-law, shared with the servants. There were two separate apartments and the servants were there. The servants took care of the *Kaiser hund* also. But the *Kaiser hund* was not so loyal that he wouldn't come down from the white house. I mean, he would come down from that house and join the crowd for lunch.

PAUL CUMMINGS: See what was happening.

VICTORIA BARR: [They laugh.] See what was happening.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, Sobey was there with his wife Melissa, and was more involved, much more talkative, much more fluently talkative, more accessible that way. He was—he spoke to me much more in the context of me as a young painter. He seemed to be able to handle mostly successfully the fact that I had decided to become a painter. This was when I was at Yale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: When I applied for the Fulbright and various other grants, he recommended me with enthusiasm, and he wrote me some beautiful letters saying how happy he was that I was a painter, and was supportive from the very first moment. Now, my parents must have told him. I didn't know him intimately enough that I would have called him and said, "Jim, you know, I'm thinking of becoming a painter," or something like that. Although I didn't know him as well as Philip, now if I had to do it all over again, I might have become very close to Jim because he was an accessible person in a way that Philip was not.

But anyway, there we all were. And the discussions were about the museum. With Philip they were about architecture and the museum. With Jim, they were about artists. Jim would spend a lot of time with artists, knew them, talked about them, was constantly trying to write something, trying to write—for instance, he tried to write something on Bacon. But Bacon was so difficult and so dissolute that often he was not able to reach him, or would go to London and Bacon would be off gambling somewhere, something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, I have very, very good memories of Jim and Melissa. And in a certain sort of dressing room that they had downstairs, there was a wall of photographs of all of their artist friends.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. I know, yes. I've seen that.

VICTORIA BARR: And that was fun. It was intimate, also, casual, and fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was something that was informal about that house, spare in a way that you really see

the paintings, and they are obviously there to be seen.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Yes. It was very nicely put together, and not too fussy. That's right. Now, there were other paintings in other rooms, but the rooms that I remember most vividly were the dining room, where Bacon was, and the living room, where the two de Chiricos and Miró, the green and yellow Miró. I know there were other works, but it's been a long time since I've been there, and I don't remember them now.

So that was our life together and made up, in a sense, what family life I did have, which was less, I think, than most people, what with all the camps and all the schools and going away to boarding school at 14.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the Sleeping Beauties and everything else.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Right. Yeah. So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, one thing that intrigues me, though—it's an obvious question.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, ask it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As you spent more time painting, as you got into it, say, late 20s or 30s, and you were figuring out what you were doing, what did all these experiences mean, the fact that you had the opportunity of meeting all these artists, meeting collectors and the architects and the people who had shaped so much of what's been going on for the last four decades around the country, and a very specific area? Are there things that you gleaned out of that you find useful, enlightening, or provocative or dismaying?

VICTORIA BARR: I think that, although in many ways it's been difficult for me as a painter, that being in this milieu gave me the confidence to do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: If you see what I mean. That it took—that it was a great risk to take, coming from the milieu that I came from. But coming from that milieu gave me the confidence to do it. I cannot sort out specifically—I might, you know, in a later interview. I might think about it for two weeks and come up with something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But I must say that I looked and I looked and I looked. I absorbed and absorbed. What can I say now? I can't say anything more than that. It's not an obvious question; it's a very thought-provoking question. Or maybe it's so obvious that I never thought of it. It's a very important question. I mean, those are obvious questions, they are very important. The transition was in some ways very difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I think that there was a certain amount of dismay on the part of everybody. On the part of my father—but the fact is that—no, all that looking has—I mean, I'll give you an example of what I mean. That is, as I have painted through the years, I have seen influences of certain artists come up in my work, even if they—or I have felt them even though they may not be very direct. And I'm sure, you know that word *osmosis*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That it's all just in my blood. The way you can't tell how you've been influenced when you were there from the start. Do you see what I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: The outside influences might be easier to talk about. I can tell you how I was influenced by Balinese dancing, say, much more easily than I can about those sort of early years, where that was my life. I missed it when I wasn't around it. When I was at school, it seemed barren. When I was at Radcliffe, not having any visual input of the quality that I had was very, very difficult. I'm sure I've had a better education, although not comprehensive, better visual education than just about anybody I know.

Because I started getting educated from the day I opened my eyes, visually. Works of art were in the house, and I saw then every day, every day. That's one reason why I'm still interested, although I know that many people don't believe in this anymore. I am still interested in having works of art that can be put into homes, because I think that you don't—to live with a painting is extremely different from seeing it in a public place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: Or, I mean—and I mean even—by a public place, I mean that the idea that now, you know, works have to be monumental, or easel painting is put down. I mean, I don't—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's coming back rapidly, subtly.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean I know that easel painting does not necessarily—there's a double meaning there, which I well understand.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: But the fact is that easel-sized painting fits into homes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, even if the scale—I mean, easel painting, we talk about putting down easel painting where there was a concern with the scale of the painting, not so much the size, but that it has to be a huge scale and everything. But, sitting in a room quietly in your own home, you know, with a Rothko, with a Matisse, with a Tanguy, with a Picasso, day after day, I mean, it must have done something major to me. It's a form, I suppose. It's an early form of contemplation. I really learnt how to sit and look at something for a long, long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, would you talk about the paintings at home over dinner or at lunch or wherever?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah, we did. We discussed them. We discussed them at Jim's. We discussed what he was going to buy. We discussed the Bacon; we really went into it. My most vivid conversations with my father were about works of art. But they were a little different from the way we used to discuss works of art at Yale. They were less "Does it work, doesn't it work?" Less involved with how the spaces—you know, they were more—I don't know how to say it. But—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like trying to describe—

VICTORIA BARR: A painting was like a person. A painting was like a person, in the sense that it elicited responses. It elicited responses [Inaudible.]. I remember every time I went to Jim's, we would go around the house and look, and go upstairs, even if we didn't have any reason to go upstairs. We usually didn't. We'd go upstairs, go in the bedroom, look at the paintings there. He would talk about what he was thinking of buying, and we just talked and talked and talked and talked and talked.

But I couldn't say to you now, that I came away with a verbal definition of what I thought—what I thought a good work of art was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious when you differentiate between the way pictures were talked about at Yale and the way you might have done with your father or your mother, and the business of them being a person or having a very specific personality. What was the difference in the dialog or in the words?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it's hard to remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, in general sort of feeling terms, then.

VICTORIA BARR: I'm going to just say what comes to my mind. I mean I look at a painting, like you'd look at the Bacon, talk about how sinister the dog was, what an object of terror. You talk about how difficult Bacon was. Look at the de Chiricos, which were of special interest because my mother was Italian, and also the phenomenon of the fact that, according to most people, including my parents and Jim, he had this period after which he just fell to pieces as an artist and, you know, never recouped himself in any way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And talk about the sort of emptiness of those squares and the kind of, lonely quality of those visions. A lot of the time—I can remember—I mean, I remember the green and the yellow so well, of the Miró. And I can, just talking about that green and that yellow—but we did not talk about how the painting was put together. There was no kind of analysis, no formal analysis done. I think that the paintings were seen more as a whole. I mean, we had long discussions about the Puissant and whether Philip would change the painting there and how no other painting seemed to work in that room, and how the Puissant worked because it was—and still—why is it the Puissant worked and the Kline didn't? The Kline was really very disruptive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The same structured spatial idea of Puissant in a building.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, yes, right. And the fact that it probably wasn't Puissant, but a follower of Puissant. They were sometimes—I mean, that was discussed in a historical context. I had my own discussions with my father

when I was a child about the paintings that were in the apartment. I had a story for every painting, my own interpretation, which my father would listen to with rapt attention.

Like the Bacchant [ph], which is mine, was given to me, I think by Vera List, but I'm not sure. I could be wrong about that. Anyway, that's a tall vertical painting of a tree. And in the tree, there are lots of birds. There's one bird on the ground. That was known as *The Bird's Apartment House*. And the one bird on the ground couldn't get an apartment in that apartment house. I used to do this interpretation for my father and for various guests. I became another interpreter of the works of art that were in the house.

The Miró, the beautiful pale, pale blue Miró—and that was *The Spoon Man*, because the figure in it, the so-called figure in it, looked like a large soup spoon. It was actually called *The Man with the Pipe* [1925]. That was *The Spoon Man*, and it was always referred to in the family as *The Spoon Man*. That was my interpretation of it.

Then the Tanguy was a very unusual Tanguy, which we no longer have. But anyway, it was green. There were some clusters of gray bone-like objects floating in the center. And then down at the bottom, there were some other forms that were settled in what looked to me to be underwater. So that would be the floor of the ocean, as I recall. That was an underwater scene, which was influenced by my tremendous influence in swimming and swimming underwater in Vermont so that I was very familiar with underwater, the appearance of things under the water. And there were a few of these gray things that were floating up to the central cluster.

So you see, I had all these interpretations of my own childhood, though. Needless to say, when I was at Philip's and Jim's I wasn't that young. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: But mostly, we looked with rapt attention. There was also another person that we visited and his name was John Senior, Jr.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And Susan Senior had become either a trustee of the museum or on the Junior Council or something like that. But anyway, he collected Mondrians. We went to visit him several times and that was my first introduction to Mondrian in any concentrated form.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you react to that?

VICTORIA BARR: Very positively.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because that's very different from—

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it is. Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —you know, Picasso and Matisse and Tanguy and that whole—

VICTORIA BARR: Loved them. Just loved them. And when I was in Holland when I was about 16, let's say, I went to the Mondrian Museum—I don't remember whether it was in The Hague or in Rotterdam. I think it was in The Hague—saw the early paintings and how the trees, all the trees and how they gradually transformed, transformed, transformed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That seemed to me to be really miraculous, in fact. But I took to a lot of art very fast. That's all I can say about the way we talked about that. Maybe we did more looking than we did talking. But they were living presences in our midst, so to speak, that we paid attention to. I mean, we would go—like every time—as I said before, every time we went to Jim's for a drink, we'd just look. Just sit and look and look and look and look.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, since we're still in that period, which is like mid-50s to early '60s, I'll talk a little bit about Yale again, about Vincent Scully, for instance, who was at Yale at that time teaching architectural history. He taught two courses. He taught modern architecture, and he taught Greek architecture, or Greek and Roman, but mostly Greek. And he was a great teacher. He used the largest lecture hall available to the Art History department, and packed it, particularly for his Greek course.

He was freshly back from Greece, I believe, for the first time, or he had made two visits that were very close together when I took his course. He was—I don't know how to put it except to say that he was in love. He was absolutely ecstatic. He was an ecstatic teacher, and he was a showman and spoke beautifully and had a very

poetic way of speaking about things. He was a very good lecturer.

He was the kind of teacher that turned people on. A lot of people took his course, a lot of undergraduates took his course, and it was very, very famous. I think that my criticism of him, having said many positive things—all the things that I said, I feel very positively about. To be able to hold the attention of students in a lecture is quite something. But anyway, he was in the process of developing his theories about why the Greek temples were built where they were built and their relationship to the mountains surrounding them. My criticism is that he was so involved with this new theory of his that he seemed to stretch it to, one, boredom—"Here we go again"—two, to the breaking point, where really—

I mean, his considerations were that the temples were built in relation to the mountains that were nearby, and that they were horned mountains, which in pre-Classical Greece, were references to the mother goddess. I can't remember the theory in detail, because the fact is that I have been in Greece. In Knossos—of course, that is pre-Classical also. In Knossos, you can, there is a mountain in the distance, which is horned, meaning that it has a double peak, and there it works. In Phaestos, it doesn't, the summer palace in Crete, it doesn't work so well.

But the fact is that what he did for me, and I would assume for many other people, is that he made me aware of what I was aware of already. But he articulated it, the setting of the building, the context of the surrounding landscape. And whether it be the Greek landscape, which of course, is extraordinary, or even setting buildings in New York—in other words, the building is not isolated. It's not an isolated object. This, I felt, was very, very interesting and a very important thing to learn about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is he influential in your interest in architecture?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he was. But I was already interested in architecture. But yes, he was. With him was that I began to—I mean, I knew about Mies and I knew about Frank Lloyd Wright, about Philip, about, you know, Johansen and Gropius, about Alto. But what he did was, he sort of lined them all up. And I can't say that if I looked at a magazine now that I would be able to identify necessarily their buildings. At that time, I certainly was. I had a very quick eye, and I could just—as soon as the slide came on I knew what it was.

Anyway, it put some order into things. He was interesting as a teacher. He was a phenomenon, really. And I think that anything to generate enthusiasm and love—I mean, it was love, at Yale, which was pretty stodgy and a pretty sad place, in general—was very alive and exciting. It was exciting. He is friendly with Philip and I have seen him there and everything.

Then Bill McDonald was the other teacher that I thought was interesting in a completely different way. He gave a course on Byzantine art and architecture, mostly architecture. Of course, there were mosaics, and he talked about them in the context of the architecture where they were. With him, it was a seminar. It wasn't a big course at all. It was fascinating. He gave—with Vince Scully, it was as if you were a bird, and you were flying through the sites that the temples were in. With McDonald, he was a guide and you were on foot in the various buildings, like Hagia Sofia, say, or the—I mean, the Blue Mosque or something like that.

You almost became a restorer, a conservator in that he talked a great deal about discovering certain frescoes, certain mosaics, how they were uncovered, how they had been painted over, and then the paint had been removed. You saw it on foot, and then you saw it from five inches away. So that the whole space between you and the building, or you and the mosaics, the space, the gap, was very different.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was like being there. Of course, with Scully, it was like being there, too. I'm talking again about his Greek course. But you were there in a way that, unless you had your private helicopter, you would never be again, unless, you know, you had a terrific view of the temple, whatever temple, in the distance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But he was later to write a book about Greek temples called *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* [Yale University Press: 1969]. But he had not written it, which leads me to believe he was developing his book in that course. I never discussed it with him. I didn't know him very well.

But anyway, they were both good. I think that McDonald was not appreciated because his subject matter was so obscure, which is too bad because he was an extremely good teacher. In both cases, you got a very strong feeling of what the places were like, without being there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find that when you finally visited some of those places? Were you well prepared or ill prepared?

VICTORIA BARR: Very, very well prepared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you see it in their eyes or make your own discoveries?

VICTORIA BARR: Both, both. I took my hat off to Vincent Scully several times while I was in Greece. For instance, he had a hate for the Athens Hilton, because he felt that the view, it wrecked a certain view from the Acropolis. Well, I mean, the view from the Acropolis was no big deal. You saw Athens, but the Hilton stood out like a sore thumb, and it did. I remember. I saw the Hilton. I hate to say it, but I thought of Scully.

[They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aha.

VICTORIA BARR: I thought of Scully a lot when I was in Greece. So, Greece hits certain people. And it hit Scully. It really did. It hit me, too. So he was somebody that I could relate to, and my passion for Greece was rather different from Scully's. But anyway, I will talk about my visit to Greece later, on a later tape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Peggy Guggenheim? Is that in this period, or is that much later?

VICTORIA BARR: It's a little earlier, actually.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's earlier?

VICTORIA BARR: It's earlier, yeah. The first time I went to visit Peggy, I was with my parents. That's when I was 14, and that was the opening of the Biennale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. That was '51, right?

VICTORIA BARR: '52.

PAUL CUMMINGS: '52?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then you went back?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I went back. I'm getting the times mixed up. I went back several times, always with my parents except for a very recent visit where I was alone. But I didn't stay with her. We always stayed with her. I will be able to remember the date of this particular story next time, if not now. But anyhow, there were many comings and goings at Peggy's, because she did open her palazzo, the unfinished palace, which was on the Grand Canal, every now and then to people who were visiting Venice, special people. Now, of course, she has a museum and everything, it's different. But then, she did not.

So, there was a stream of visitors and then we all were living there. There were lots of rooms, and again, it was amazing to, you know, be in a bedroom with two Delvauxs. Wake up in the morning, and there they were, a woman sitting on a chair with a great pink ribbon around her and everything. I was already more partial to Magritte. [They laugh.] But anyway, I could settle for a Delvaux.

VICTORIA BARR: And there were lots of them, Max Ernsts and Pollocks, I think, although I don't remember them too well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not many of them.

VICTORIA BARR: It was a beautiful place and very handsome. I remember my room was on water level, of course. But what I mean was it was on the canal side. And I could—speaking of windows—sit in the window. I remember sitting in the window and writing in my journal and looking out at all the boats going by in the Grand Canal. And Peggy had a gondola with—and the gondoliers had the correct uniform for—her palace had its colors. The colors happened to be blue-green.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were colored?

VICTORIA BARR: Its own colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but which colors were they?

VICTORIA BARR: Blue-green.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Blue-green.

VICTORIA BARR: Blue-green was the—I think this was probably historical. I mean, I don't think that the palazzo was terribly old; I don't know. But anyway, it had its colors. So anyway, there were the gondoliers in their blue-green striped shirts and we used to go around in the gondola, and she had a little motorboat. We used to go around in the motorboat, go out to the—there was a lighthouse, well, beyond where the Biennale is. If you went, instead of stopping off at the gardens, where the public gardens where the Biennale is, if you kept going there was a lighthouse at the end of a breakwater—that was the end of it. We used to go swimming off there. We went out to Torcello. And we went around—oh, we just went around Venice, either in the gondola or in the motorboat.

She and my father had a great deal to talk about. They were very—my parents were very friendly with her. She had a lot of Lhasa terriers that did not go over big. They were always peeing. I will say that, and that was awful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everywhere.

VICTORIA BARR: Everywhere, and yapping. Oh, man, they were terrible. There were seven of them, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She never trained them. Never. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That was not so great. But anyway, I did want to tell you one story. When you were at Peggy's—and we were at Peggy's, you know, for a week, for 10 days each visit—we heard what was going on in Venice.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Americans who were living in Venice came for dinner. Certain Italians who were living in Venice came for dinner. And in a sense, because Venice is so small, particularly in winter, we were party to all the gossip, and so on and so forth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Which is amusing—let's put it that way. But anyway, one time the flagship of the Sixth Fleet came to Venice, American fleet. The admiral or whoever it was, and his family, and the second in command, whoever that was, wanted to pay Peggy a visit, which was fine with her. I remember that this launch came from whatever this great ship was. I don't know whether it was a destroyer or what. It might have been a battleship. It might have been an aircraft carrier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whatever, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't remember anymore. But I have that down in my journal what it was. A launch came with about six sailors on it, all standing up. And it had macramé, the first time I ever saw macramé, and it had the real thing—macramé embroidery all over its decks and beautiful tassels hanging down. It was impeccable! It came to find out from Peggy, you know, when this visit was going to be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So that was the beginning. Then we decided—I way "we." We all talked about it, so we decided that this was time to roll down the red carpet because the entrance of the palazzo was set back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There were the docks, and then you would get off whatever you were going to get off, if you came from the water, and of course he was going to come by launch.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So you went up some steps. Then there was a flat section, and there was a Marino Marini of a man on a horse. Then in back of the Marino Marini, there were more steps and then you could come in. That, I suppose, was the front entrance of the palazzo. We decided that the red carpet would be rolled out down these steps. And I assume that it stopped at the Marino Marini and then continued. You know, I don't know. I can't remember exactly. So there was a red carpet.

Then there was a great debate. The great debate was that the man sitting on the Marino Marini was sitting astride, as usual, sort of looking up at the sky. And he had a rather large erect penis, which could screw on and screw off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: We couldn't figure out whether it should stay or be removed.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I do not understand the Puritanism of this debate. But anyway, that was the debate. And I'm sorry to say I don't remember what the decision was. But we laughed a lot. Boy, did we laugh.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, anyhow, the day was set. In the morning, we went swimming. This was rather usual, actually. We all went swimming. We came back and the admiral was coming, say, at four. We were going to have lunch and then maybe a little nap and then be ready. At least four or five, say, late afternoon. There was a commotion in the palazzo. It turned out that the cook, who was a man, had had a terrible fight with his either wife or mistress, and had tried to commit suicide with sleeping pills.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: And there was this—we did not know whether he would die. And all we knew was that he had to be walked. He could not sit down because he would fall asleep. He could not stand up because he would fall asleep. He had to be walked. So my mother was elected to walk him because she could speak fluent Italian.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Peggy was busy calling doctors and stuff like that. It wasn't suitable for me and my father was no good. So anyway, this poor cook was walked. I can remember my mother walking back and forth, back and forth into the garden with this man. It was a garden on the other side of the palazzo where you would walk out of and get onto the street. She walked him and walked him and walked him. The doctor arrived, and he survived. It was not that serious. He was taken to the hospital.

But this was very upsetting and a tremendous upheaval. I mean, needless to say, lunch fell by the wayside. But anyway, it was very traumatic and very upsetting. Implications for the future, was this romance or this marriage broken forever or whatever? You know, it was a household thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, anyway, everybody then tried to grab a bite to eat, because we hadn't had anything since breakfast, and change clothes. Get out of swimming clothes, change clothes, and get ready for this rather fancy visit. They came, and nobody was ready except me. So, I greeted them, and I explained what had happened and I took them around the house and gave them a guided tour.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Yes! Now, this was either age 14 or age 17; I don't know which. I'll remember it. But anyway, it was a great moment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they must have come with a whole entourage, didn't they?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, they did. They came with their wives. Their wives were there. I guess their wives had come to Venice, because the fleet was in, and their daughters. There was a young daughter, a little bit older than I was, and we got together later and discussed dancing, as usual. I don't know what the latest dance was. I mean, it was the Pachanga or the Boss Nova, which she could do and I couldn't, so had to learn. But anyway.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Eventually, fairly shortly after their arrival, Peggy came out and continued the tour. Then my parents emerged, and we explained, that the house had been in chaos since one. We managed to have a very nice time. Of course, these people really, I think, did not know very much about art. But I think that they had a very interesting time. I'm sure it was a very unusual thing for them to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I'm sure it was.

VICTORIA BARR: Unusual for anybody. You know, to be taken into the house is very different from going into the museum which exists now. Then they left on the launch, going down a red carpet by the Marino Marini and onto the beautiful launch, with all the sailors, who stayed in the launch while they were being shown around the house.

Staying with Peggy was—I got along with Peggy, fortunately. She was an older person, then. She's always been a lot—of course, she's always older than I am. That never changes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Absolutely.

VICTORIA BARR: Anyhow, I did get along with her. She had blue-green toenail polish, which doesn't seem like much now, but it certainly did then. We used to go to Harry's Bar, talk about paintings, look at them. I had opinions. Peggy used to ask my father about what was going on. We used to just spend time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She stopped collecting, though, didn't she, a long time ago?

VICTORIA BARR: I think so. I don't know, because I don't keep up with her. But that's all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

[END OF REEL 3 SIDE B.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So this is side 7. It's the 2nd of February 1977, Paul Cummings talking to Victoria Barr in her loft on 14th Street.

I think just to move ahead from last time, you had talked about many of the people that you had met over the years and artists and architects. Chronologically, we are up now into the early '60s, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Actually I would like to interrupt you and do just a small recap from the time before last time, when I spent the summer at Copenhagen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Because I made a very interesting trip from Copenhagen to Hungary. I was in Copenhagen, and some friends of mine—Benny Corsinen [ph] and Leonard Anderson—who were filmmakers got a scholarship from Hungary—this was probably 1963—to go in a group. We took one section of the Orient Express and went from Copenhagen on the train all the way across the Baltic and all the way through Germany to Vienna on the train.

We changed trains and went into Budapest. We were there for three weeks as guests of the Hungarian government at a time when it was very difficult to get into Hungary and film—virtually impossible for Hungarians to leave without their leaving sub rosa. This was therefore quite exciting. It was right after the Cuban Missile Crisis. In fact, it was like real Cold War—real Cold War period.

We stayed in a very elegant hotel on one of the main streets in Pest where there were many Chinese businessmen, which was, of course, a whole new thing for us then. We were taken around in Budapest and up to Lake Balaton and to look at the lake and the harvest, the grape harvest, because by this time it was September. And then we went south and saw a really quite extraordinary folk festival, all of which was completely set up by the government. It wasn't a particularly spontaneous occasion. But there were great horseback riders and gypsies, or theoretical gypsies. I think they probably were actually persecuted at that time, but gypsy-like riding. And we tasted a lot of the wines and liqueurs that are special to Hungary.

We had a driver and a limousine that took us everywhere. And we had two—well, basically one Hungarian filmmaker whose name was Kézdi-Kovacs Zsolt, known to us as Zsolt. That was his first name. He took us everywhere. Well, he took us everywhere, but the fact is that I think that the reason we were so well taken care of was, aside from the fact that we were on a scholarship was the fact that they wanted to keep us under control.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And we were not able to go where we wanted to go.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way? In what terms?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I wanted to go to the section of Hungary which is to the east to Transylvania. What I wanted to do was to go to an area called the Pusta, which is like—it's like the Kumarg and there are cowboys and gypsies. It is the area of Hungary, aside from Balatan, that the poets write about and everything. We were not allowed to go there and we felt that we weren't because people were kept there in camps, who were considered to be dangerous to the government.

We made this rather innocent film about a boy. Our trip was basically very innocent. It was extremely interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of a film was it, though?

VICTORIA BARR: It was just a story about a young boy, a sort of minor Truffaut, that kind of feeling. But we were

objects of great interest to the Hungarian filmmakers that we met. They were part of a school, and we had endless discussions about the films. At that time I knew a lot about films and filmmaking and it was very exciting because we felt that they hung on our every word. And this was a very—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you brought something from the outside?

VICTORIA BARR: Right, from the outside. And Zholt had an East German friend who was staying with him who was also a filmmaker and felt as if he was—by being in Budapest, he felt as if he were on the French Riviera compared to East Germany. Whereas we felt that life was fairly lean in Hungary, although I must say we went to some very beautiful places that we felt a kind of oppression on the streets where nobody crossed against the light. Nobody ran in the street. Nobody yelled across the street. That everything was very, very unusually quiet. And nobody crossed against the light.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fairly typical on Eastern Europe.

VICTORIA BARR: I think so. I think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's just a habit and a tradition.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I suppose, that people are careful in public. And we had some complications with Zholt because he wanted to go to the West and felt that he was going to be able to, and that he wanted our traveler's checks. So we made this very complicated kind of exchange where we used his money in Hungary, and we gave him traveler's checks. But we had one conversation over the telephones at the hotel, which frightened him very much, and he felt that he had made a terrible mistake and that our room might have been bugged. But, all of this was very vague. We had no proof of any kind. In fact, the thing that—it was a touching, a very touching trip more than anything else. It was a trip that I suppose had some kind of potential danger to it. But the fact is that more than anything else, it was very touching.

When we left, the only problem we had when we left the people that had looked after us, Zholt and some other people said to us that we should have no trouble at the border and that they would, in some way, try and help us out if we did. I can't remember the details since it was so long ago. But anyway, we got to the border. And the customs inspectors came in and looked. We had a lot of stuff with us. I mean, we had a lot of equipment and all the suitcases and everything, everything up on racks. The only thing they looked at was that Leonard, who was the cameraman, had a cylindrical case about four feet long, with a tripod in it. And it was blue, round and blue and strange. We felt that maybe the customs inspectors might have thought that it was a gun or something. I mean, it sounds funny to talk about it now this way. But the fact is that then, things were much tighter, very—you know, like really a lot, lot tighter.

So anyway, we finally left, and we got into Vienna again. We opened the doors of our carriage, our compartment to help each other unload all this equipment. The noise level in the station in Vienna was such that we thought that we had come in at a moment when there was a holiday or where, like parents were putting groups of children on a train or something, where there was an unusual amount of noise. The fact was, it was a perfectly ordinary day and all that was happening was life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had come back to another world.

VICTORIA BARR: We had come back to another world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. I remember that trip. It was extremely—it was very, very interesting. Hungary, I must say, when we went to Lake Balaton, and we went to Zholt's house in Buda up on the hills. His parents had a villa up there. It was a small house. Look, it was a villa-like house. And it was beautiful. The light was marvelous, a sort of gentle yellow, fall light over Buda and also Lake Balaton that was evocative of that movie by Roman Polanski called *Knife in the Water* [1962], which is about three people who are on a boat in one of those lakes, except that it's Polish, not Hungarian. But it has a very special feeling, which I'm glad that I experienced, although I've never had any wish to go to any other Eastern European country.

But it was really something to do at that time. So I just wanted to say a little about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. Why don't we jump up to the Fulbright thing?

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Back to our chronology.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, Fulbrights were still hard to get in those days because everybody wanted one, weren't they?

VICTORIA BARR: They were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you try many times or once or twice?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Yeah. I tell you how I got my Fulbright to Paris. I won't tell you how I got it. But I'll tell you a story about it.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Which has made me cynical. I had tried before. In the brochure that came out for that year, it said that painters would be allowed to go to Greece. And this was the first time in my acquaintance with the Fulbright that this was possible. So I leapt at this and wrote the lengthy application and was waiting, as you wait for the winter to go by and the juries and all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I got a phone call from the Fulbright people saying, "We are terribly sorry, and we have changed our mind again. We are not going to accept artists in Greece after all, because there isn't enough money and we feel that it should go all to archeologists and classical scholars. But you can go to France or Mexico if you would like."

I was shocked and annoyed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I was more annoyed than anything else. So, my immediate thought was, "Oh, my God, now I have to rewrite a whole other project." Needless to say, the reason I wanted to go was to paint. I did not have any particular—I wanted very much to go to Greece, but I wanted to go to Greece to paint. I mean, it was as simple as that. But I—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What reason, though? Why there to paint?

VICTORIA BARR: Just a feeling, a feeling about that place, that I would be inspired if I went there. So I discussed the situation on the phone with them. And I said, "Well, what am I going to do now?" I was so angry. I just said, "I spent a lot of time on that application."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And now you're telling me, "Well, you can go to France or you can go to Mexico."

PAUL CUMMINGS: La-de-da.

VICTORIA BARR: La-de-da, you know. And they said to me, "Well, what you do is you simply say that what you want to do in France is exactly the same thing that you want to do in Greece." I said, "But that's not going to work. I want to go to Greece for specific reasons." I was furious. So I sat down, and I wrote something else. What I wrote—it's funny, in every grant application, although I felt that I was bullshitting a bit, that every grant application I've ever filled out has always been something that I really wanted to do. It's very strange. In retrospect, it has inspired me, even if I haven't gone to the place.

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: In Greece, what I said I wanted to do was to go and look at—basically it was to see what Vincent Scully was talking about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And to paint in the theoretical holy or spiritual areas in which temples were built. This was the first sort of words that I had ever used which referred to anything like that. I thought it was completely off the wall then, although I thought it was a very good project. And now I see that it was completely true. But I didn't—I didn't so then. I was really very cynical then, although I felt that it was an intelligent project.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was your painting like in those days? [Inaudible] the early '60s.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it was landscape. It looked like film strips in that it was one landscape below another

below another below another all on the same canvas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, vertically, boom, boom, boom.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, right, vertically placed, one below the other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With great shifts within it or—

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, sometimes, yeah. They were not repeats.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it looked as if you were moving?

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Up or down.

VICTORIA BARR: And the time of day changed also. But the landscape was basically all of the same place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were they real landscapes or made-up landscapes?

VICTORIA BARR: They were real. And then also, I painted a lot of butterflies at that time, one of which my father liked so much that he asked me for it.

But anyway, I think that then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, back to the Fulbright. You got the Fulbright.

VICTORIA BARR: I got the Fulbright to France. What I said in my application was that I wanted to go to the places where the Impressionists had painted, and in a sense it was very closely aligned to the first application. But—so that summer, I went to McDowell, which although—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sixty-four, right?

VICTORIA BARR: That was the summer of '64. And although I feel that it's terrific for some people, it wasn't really for me. I like to have a life that's more integrated with everyday life and not so special and secluded. I hated being off in the back woods, was not happy. But it's terrific for some people.

So then I went to France that fall. And I went on the old *Queen Mary*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My goodness, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: With a lot of other Fulbrights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, did they go en masse?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, en masse, yeah. I met some of the people that I would see a lot of for the next two years, or the next year, depending on how long they stuck around. Nancy Graves was right out of Yale. And I had been told, myself having graduated from Yale, not soon—you know, not soon before. What am I trying to say?

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not soon before?

VICTORIA BARR: Not soon before, whatever that means. Earlier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: She was there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With Richard?

VICTORIA BARR: No. She was alone. She was alone.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow.

VICTORIA BARR: She was on a Fulbright.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But she went to Italy or something, didn't she?

VICTORIA BARR: She was on a Fulbright. Richard came to Paris six weeks later on a Yale traveling fellowship. The following year, he got a Fulbright to Italy, and she and he moved from Paris to Florence the following year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That's how it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: So, Richard was still back in America.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Richard Serra.

VICTORIA BARR: Richard Serra, right. They were not married at the time. I knew about Nancy. I had met her at the French Embassy party for all of us for one second. The next time I saw her, we were out two days, and we were somehow or other walking through first class together. Needless to say, we were not traveling first class. There was a lifeboat drill and we were closed into a very, very long corridor. All the doors against—that made the corridors into compartments, they all closed automatically and we were stuck. Nancy and I—Nancy had on jeans and cowboy boots. She sat down on the floor, and she said, "Jesus Christ! When this is over, let's go into [a bar] first and have a drink."

[They laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: And she was very tough.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Indeed.

VICTORIA BARR: Very tough then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I said, "Sure." She had been very well recommended to me and I suppose vice-versa, actually. So anyway, eventually—and we were in this sort of wood-paneled corridor, very, very fancy corridor, sitting on the floor waiting for the doors to open again.

The other person I really got to know on the boat was Bob Fiore, who eventually became my neighbor here on 14th Street. But anyway—and we had a fairly uneventful voyage over. Everybody was very busy getting to know everybody else and we would go up to the bar with our slides. I remember this now. Everybody would pass their slides around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic.

VICTORIA BARR: It was amazing. It was quite a feeling of camaraderie, actually, and that we wanted to get to know one another. It was an exchange of information. So, anyway, we got to Paris. I was lucky. My mother had found an apartment that belonged to Bernard Pfriem, which was Disneuf Rue de Feuillantines. I still—*disneuf* is nineteen. It's in the fifth of arrondissement off the Rue St. Jacques. I was very lucky because nobody else found a place. I was met by le Count de la Falaise, who was the ex-husband of Maxime de la Falaise, who was the then-mistress of Bernard Pfriem, living in New York. She sent me to de la Falaise, saying that I could stay with him while this tiny apartment was being fixed up a little bit.

So he met me at the boat train, and so did Késdi-Kovac Zsolt, who arrived in Paris, arrived in the West, and was there to see me, and above all to practically live at the *cinematheque* for the next two months and see all the Western movies he possibly could. So anyhow, that was the beginning. There was an orientation program at the Sorbonne, which everybody went to in a sort of half-hearted way, because the people I really knew or would get to know were artists, you see. They were not really involved with the Sorbonne, except on a formal level. They didn't go to classes or anything.

The next person that I met in the Sorbonne program to orient us to Paris—God help us all, everybody was coming down with colds—it was raining all the time—was Philip Glass, who was also on Fulbright and somebody whom I liked enormously. He was very friendly. So slowly, slowly everybody began to settle down. Eventually, Richard Serra arrived. Then Philip's girlfriend, JoAnne Akalaitis, came also, just at about the same time as Richard did. And my friend Michael Chelminski was there living with his brother Rudy in Bernard Pfriem's studio on the Rue de la Tondes War [ph], very beautiful studio.

Then there was a philosophy major called David Funt, who was not really—he was not really part of this group.

But he was a friend of mine. Another—he was studying philosophy and became completely involved with the Ben Barka kidnapping that occurred either the first or the second winter that we were there. We were, in fact, although busy, very bored. It was very boring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I mean, after New York, after—it was just strange. Paris was very boring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you speak French?

VICTORIA BARR: I spoke French. Yeah, I spoke French enough to get along.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Get around.

VICTORIA BARR: I did not like the French. The French did not like me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I thought they were rude, and I was very intimidated by them, and I wasn't the least bit interested in them. I wanted to be in Greece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you were in Paris.

VICTORIA BARR: I was in Paris. Also, I found out that there was really nothing going on in Paris at that time, and people were asking me, "Oh, New York? What's going on in New York? What is this about Pop Art?" All that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what did you do then? I mean, if the city was boring and life was boring, you worked?

VICTORIA BARR: Worked a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You saw this group of people frequently?

VICTORIA BARR: We did. We saw one another a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't get involved with any French world?

VICTORIA BARR: Not really. Philip was studying with Boulanger and JoAnne did some dubbing. Everybody was very poor because the Fulbrights were not really big enough. The amount given was not big enough to live on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: We were also—they were also friendly with Ruth and Lee Breuer, who eventually put together the Red Horse Animation, which JoAnne was in, and they did a lot of stuff by Becket, and they are still going strong now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Everybody worked hard. Everybody got sick all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From what? The weather, the food, or just living?

VICTORIA BARR: Both weather and food, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not enough money?

VICTORIA BARR: The whole thing. Nobody got seriously sick, but everybody was sick all the time, particularly Richard Serra, surprisingly enough because he looks like a horse.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: But he's not. I don't know. Maybe he's very strong now. But he wasn't then. And nobody was particularly happy, except for David Funt. He was the most sort of [Inaudible.], isn't that the word? He really knew—he knew French well. He was intellectual. He got around. We used to go dancing at Buttercups at Montparnasse. I did—here we go again. I did have letters to friends of my parents. But I'd just like to say a little bit more about the life that I had with this group of people.

We used to go to each other's houses a lot. And we used to go to the cafes in Montparnasse, more than around

Saint-Germain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? Why?

VICTORIA BARR: Because they were closer to where everybody lived. They lived up around Montparnasse, both Nancy and Richard and Philip and JoAnne. And I lived equidistant between Montparnasse and Saint-Germain.

So, I wanted to mention another person who was slightly younger who was there, either the first or second year, somebody called Peter Warshall.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Warshaw?

VICTORIA BARR: Warshall. I think it was Warshall. I don't remember how to spell it. I think it's W-A-R-S-H-A-L-L.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: He was right out of Harvard and studying with Levi-Strauss. I think he was there the second year I was there. But he was the most exciting and intelligent of all of them and very turned on to Dylan, and talked about Bob Dylan all the time and was involved with ecology. He was the first person I'd ever met who had ever said that word. He made a very much greater—I learnt things from him that I never really did. I learnt—he was sort of the voice of the '60s coming through to us in a way that none of the others were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because he was sort of hip. He was a very hip guy, and less involved with making his own world the way we were, and less involved with sort of what was going on in the city—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he was involved in popular culture.

VICTORIA BARR: And with popular culture.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So that he was an enormously interesting person, too. He became a close friend of mine. Diana Kurz was there, whom I have re-seen in conjunction with Tibetan Buddhism, and who said, interestingly enough, that Peter Warshall is also involved with it in California. It doesn't surprise me, actually, which is interesting.

Of course, there were lots and lots of other people there, other Fulbrights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what kind of work did you do? You had a studio, right?

VICTORIA BARR: I lived in this little apartment and I used one of the rooms as a studio.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do? Did it affect your work? What was the outcome? We're talking about working.

VICTORIA BARR: I was doing the same landscape paintings that I had done previously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were these from drawings or photographs or imagination at this point?

VICTORIA BARR: Imagination.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aha.

VICTORIA BARR: And then I would eventually go to Greece, and I took a lot of photographs there, some of which I used in later paintings. They weren't entirely those landscape strips. I was not—this was not a particularly inspired period for me. I do not think that it was a good idea to have gone to France.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't go to museums or the galleries?

VICTORIA BARR: I went to the museums a lot. Yes, I went to the museums a lot, I went to the galleries a lot. And I looked around. But I felt that whatever I wanted to learn was in New York. But I went to all the museums. I had been to many of them already in previous travels. I wanted to be in New York. One of the main reasons I was there was for financial reasons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, this was one way not to have a job, one way not to work too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Get some time.

VICTORIA BARR: Get some time. What I didn't realize was that I would feel as if I were in exile, which is the way I felt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: I was not inspired by Paris. I wasn't happy there. I was extremely lonely. I didn't like the French. But there were certain aspects of Paris that I liked a lot. I went to the movies constantly, and I liked that. Just to get to know another city, another great city, to see as much of it as possible. There was a pleasure to be able to go out to a variety of restaurants in the same neighborhood, or a variety of movies in the same neighborhood. You could just walk.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like New York that way.

VICTORIA BARR: It seemed more hospitable in some way. In New York, if you miss one restaurant, unless you're on 56th Street, you may have to jump in a taxi and go somewhere else. In France, within three blocks you have five restaurants that you could go to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That's one thing. But it was boring. It was in the art world, you see, there was always this feeling that the action was elsewhere. That was depressing; galleries were closing. It was all so, you know. But anyway.

Now, the person that was there was Iris Owens, who is a writer and wrote that book about Claude. Eventually, she mostly wrote pornography at that time under the name of Harriet Daimler.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, for Giroux [ph].

VICTORIA BARR: For Giroux [ph], yes, who was around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Harriet was around. She had been a friend of the [Inaudible.] and was also a friend of Takis, a great, great friend of Takis, who was around off and on, showing with Iolas, living on the Rue de Beaux-Arts, I believe. I may be wrong about that. Maybe it was the Rue de Seine, but anyway, down there right by the river. And he was there. When he was there, he was with Raymondos, who was one of his great and close friends from Greece. Lillianne Lijn, his wife, was not around. But I would meet her that winter or that spring in Greece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She was in New York?

VICTORIA BARR: She was—I don't know where she was. She was in New York?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. Because I met her here, it must have been in '62 or '63 or something like that. It was in the Green Gallery on 57th Street when Vic had it. It must have been around that time.

VICTORIA BARR: She could have been in New York and then gone to Greece, and we would have met there. Takis I knew already because of Iris and Farman. I mean, I knew—I had met them all through Farman—Takis, Iris and Lillianne in New York, when I was at Yale, and William Burrows, when Takis showed at Iolas here in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, in the old gallery.

VICTORIA BARR: In the old gallery. That was when I first met Lillianne and all of them, through Farman. So when Harriet was in Paris, she introduced me to another friend of hers, called Howard Sackler. He was a playwright and a director living in London, came to Paris for a vacation. He eventually wrote a play called *The Great White Hope* [1967] about boxing and some other things. But anyway, he also became a friend. We worked and went to cafes. John Honesby [ph] was in Paris at the time and I had dinner with him. John Ashbury was there. Sometimes we would go dancing. John Honesby [ph] and I would go. Ragine, I think it was called. We went—you know, we just did—we did all that stuff, but not too much of a really high life. That was fairly rare. But we went to Les Nuages, and we went to the Rocca Sinibalda. You know, between Saint-Germain and Montparnasse and—we went to the Coupole a lot, various groups of us. All these people were not intermixed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

VICTORIA BARR: Fritz Bultman was in Paris, and his wife Jean was. We saw quite a lot of one another. He was on a different kind of Fulbright. He was on a sort of fancy lecture-type of Fulbright. He was there. We got to know and like each other a lot. So it rained. It rained so much that I think I wore boots straight for two years. I never wore them again, never took up the fashion of boots, even though Correges, the little white boots were out. It was raining, raining. How did white boots stay white in Paris? I'll never know. But anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you spend all the two years there?

VICTORIA BARR: I spent all of the two years there. But out of that two years—no, I spent two winters and two summers. Yes, it was two years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And I went to Greece for six months out of this time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Sometimes, in the spring and sometimes in the summer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, at different.

VICTORIA BARR: At different periods. No, not six consecutive months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not six continuous months.

VICTORIA BARR: In France, I made various trips. I went to the south, where I had been before. Provence, where I had been before, but I haven't mentioned it, around Aix [ph] to Arles, to [Inaudible.]. That whole section around in there, with Michael Chelminski and his mother Polly. Then we made another trip, a separate trip and went to Mont-Saint-Michel, up north around there.

Jim McDowell and his wife were in Paris. And we got quite friendly, and Michael eventually went to Indiana and worked there with Jim, and eventually met Sarah Jane Hope, the daughter of Henry Hope, whom he would eventually marry. That's Michael. And Rudy Helminski was very hospitable to all of us. When Nancy Graves and Richard Serra decided to get married, they were married by the justice of the peace in whatever arrondissement they lived in. I can't remember. Then we had the so-called wedding reception at Rudy's studio. Rudy's and Bernard Pfriem's studio, which Rudy was renting. Of course, Michael was there.

The first time I ever saw Nancy in a skirt. She had on bright green high-heel shoes. And she and Richard danced the dirty boogie for their wedding reception.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Of course, Philip and JoAnne were there, and practically nobody else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: So, they got married.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A tiny group.

VICTORIA BARR: A tiny group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Rudy was most generous. He used to take us out for dinner at the Coupole. And he always felt, as he was writing for *Life* magazine, which of course he felt—not of course, but he did feel it was a very philistine magazine, that he had this love for artists. I must say that I will always remember this about him. But our lives were okay. It was just very strange being there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did your work go? I mean, did it move?

VICTORIA BARR: Not terribly well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did it just sort of jump up and down in the same place?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. It jumped up and down in the same place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nothing—

VICTORIA BARR: I always worked.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but nothing—

VICTORIA BARR: No, not for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —picked up and moved? The lights, the city, the countryside, nothing?

VICTORIA BARR: No. Wasn't interested.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You never picked up the imagery?

VICTORIA BARR: No. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what was the Fulbright? Was it a year with a renewal, or a two-year?

VICTORIA BARR: A year with a renewal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Anyway, so halfway through, you decide you want to leave, right?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I decided I'd stick it out as long as I could. So when I got it renewed, I decided to stick it out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Nancy and Richard left. Philip and JoAnne stayed on, got more and more into the dubbing business and did things with Ruth and Lee Breuer, theater things. They did a beautiful production, a Becket production with mud on their faces, which was very extraordinary. I spent time just to do the whole Paris thing.

Then I'd do the whole Greek thing separately with some friends of my parents. I knew or was introduced to some dealers. I mean, I knew Iolas. I knew Denise René. There was another dealer. Maybe I'll remember his name, a French dealer. Dorothea Spire was very hospitable at that time to artists. She was no longer running the American Center because it had run out of funds. This would have been for the USIA, or the USIS.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: She had not opened her gallery yet. She was betwixt and between, but acting as this sort of American hostess in Paris.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was she still living up [Inaudible.]?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, she was. She was, in a beautiful house with a beautiful garden and beautiful furniture and beautiful parties.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And her Pittsburgh accent.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah, yeah. She was great, though. She was really a warm breeze in a cold city.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lively lady.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, yeah. I also spent some time with Peggy Bernier. Now, [Rosamond] Russell married to John Russell. She was running magazine [*L'OEIL*] and also a gallery. Then Michael and Ileana Sonnebend were firmly installed in Paris, and I went there often because of their interest in American Pop Art. And Allan D'Arcangelo had a show there and came over for that, and Claes—Claes Oldenburg had a show in New York. And of course, I saw them. So that was busy.

All the other—I mean, I went to all the galleries. I was very, you know, looking for things even though there was not too much action.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To see. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: The place I liked best in Paris was [Les Halles].

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I can say that the buildings of [Les Halles] would probably not object to the actual building. [Inaudible.] I can say that at least. I did get to know Paris, and I now feel that I know another city. You know, I really know another great city.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does that mean to you?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it means that I know what life would be like in another city other than New York. I know what it feels like. And when I read about Paris, I know—I know. I don't know how else to put it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You understand it.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I have a sense that you can't get from a visit. You can't get it.

I remember I was so—it's funny, you know. When I talk about the life, I can't tell you—well, I mean, when I say, you know, like when we went to the [Coupole], we had some interesting times. We saw Giacometti, which was very beautiful, sitting by himself, several evenings. We were there when there was an electrical workers strike and all the lights went out. All the waiters ran to the door so that nobody would leave without paying.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I thought they were running in order to get candles to light the inside of the Coupole. No. I mean, these things, you know—

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are so practical.

VICTORIA BARR: I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They have been through it.

VICTORIA BARR: They know that everybody is going to run out the door without paying.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I mean, I just—but another person who was in Paris that I saw a lot of was Bill Copley.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

VICTORIA BARR: Billy, his son, was there also. Bill Copley took me out to eat several times. He was friendly with my parents, but also a friend of mine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was the friend?

VICTORIA BARR: He was also a friend of mine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: Bill and Noma were both friendly with my parents and separately friendly with me, although we had met through my parents. Bill would take me to lunch at the [Closerie] [Inaudible.]. He told me to read Henry Miller because I told him how lonely I was and everything. He said to read it, and I read it. Henry Miller did more to explain that feeling, that feeling of being a foreigner in Paris, even though my circumstances were very different, that sort of endless rain, even though I was working, a certain kind of aimlessness and loneliness, a terrible loneliness.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that? I mean, you seemed to have people around and know things. You just didn't feel part of the city?

VICTORIA BARR: No. There were no—my friends didn't have phones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So there was never any sense of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you write letters in the [Inaudible.] or something?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. But the [Inaudible.] never worked.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Completely unreliable, in my arrondissement. So I never could seem to—I don't want to blame Paris, except that I know this has happened to a lot of people there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or Cannes.

VICTORIA BARR: I know a lot was my own frame of mind. But a lot was—it was you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why did you renew for the second year, though, if it was so—

VICTORIA BARR: Same. Economics. Absolutely economics. No other reason.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Also, by that time I felt that I had collected myself enough to be able to function in Paris and have it be familiar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: This was more or less true, except that I got sick. It made it very difficult, because I didn't know what was wrong with me. I had a very obscure, what is called hypoglycemia, which affected me very badly in a very subtle kind of way. But anyway, so I just kept on trucking, really. I'm glad in a way. I mean, I don't—I think one of the things that I found out by living in France was that, as my mother was European, I thought that it would be a possibility that I might live in Europe. I realized after my two years in Paris that I would never, ever live anywhere else except the United States.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: Because I don't—I think that it's too much for me as a painter. I mean, this is, of course—if the art world shifted, let's hope it doesn't shift back to Paris. But if it were to shift, I might find that I would want to move. But my feeling for myself, at least, is that I have to be, in order to work well, I have to be in a place that I know, in a culture that I know. Even though I go off to other places, some of them, you know, very exotic, et cetera, that I really—I can't have that double unknown going.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: At least I want to know where all the buses go on 14th Street. That if I need a doctor, I know how to find one. If I need a lawyer, I know how to find that. I don't want to have to do all that stuff in order to build up a stable life for myself in a city that I can never really call my home. I think that if I were in business, that it would set, that I would want, you know, that unknown in my life. As I deal with the unknown in my work all the time, I don't want it in my life. I'm trying to cut out that more and more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Because it's just too much. You can never get your bearings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it takes a lot of energy.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, tremendous, tremendous energy. In a very subtle kind of way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But persistent, pernicious, almost.

VICTORIA BARR: Almost pernicious. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So anyway, you came back in '66, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I do—what I want to talk about now is about Greece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. Do Greece.

VICTORIA BARR: Because this is—the thing that is so peculiar about that time is that although I am glad that I know another great city, although I never felt that I was necessarily accepted into society or wanted to be, but I was not happy there. But I did go to Greece. This—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was this through Takis now or on your own?

VICTORIA BARR: The first time I went to Greece, I went with my mother. We did something that I'm glad we did. And I think that it's a very good way to travel in a new country first, as I've become an expert traveler since then. That is that we went on a boat tour, which was a combined boat and land tour of the great monuments of Greece. It was a way of seeing the country and, of course, it was historical. It was a pilgrimage, virtually a pilgrimage.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That's what it was for me. I mean, I assume that it is very much—well, I won't say that. I was going to say like going to Israel. But it was almost like that.

But in terms of getting to know a country where, after all, the language was very different, and the alphabet was very obscure, it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does that make a great deal of difference to you?

VICTORIA BARR: It did. I loved it.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I leapt on a new alphabet. I never realized. But it gave me—it was an easy way to go somewhere first. Then I realized after I'd been there 10 days, actually I felt as if I were home the minute I came down in the airport. When I first went to meet my mother, when I saw those little low-lying ochre hills, I was struck. I don't know how or why. But the minute I got off the plane, I knew I was somewhere familiar. I was very like strung-out, very lonely from my months in Paris. And something zapped, and I sort of revived.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: We went to—very quickly, Olympia, to Delphi. This is not in the order we went—Olympia, Delphi, Corinth. We went through the Straits of Corinth. We went to Mycenae. We went to Knossos. We went to Rhodes, Kos, Patmos, Delos, Mykonos, and back to Athens. And when I was—when we landed in Rhodes, it was night.

The next morning I went up on deck, and when I saw we were in the new harbor in Rhodes, which looks immediately at the walled section of the city, I just was astounded to look across and a very high, crenellated wall with palm trees coming up. And I said, "I must go back." So when we got to Athens, we found out that there was a system of small scholarships for foreign people who were artists to go and stay in certain sections of Greece. I got one, with the help of my ma. And I went back to Rhodes after this boat tour was over. I stayed there for about three weeks.

There, I met in a restaurant somebody called Vagales Kakavyonamis [ph], who was an archeologist, a Greek archeologist, and his colleagues and friends. They were living in the castle at the top of the city of Rhodes. I was living in the gatehouse of the castle, which was where these people on scholarship were housed. There were maybe four of us and Vagales became a friend, and so did his colleagues. They were excavating around the city of Rhodes. They were excavating houses, ancient houses. I spent a lot of time with them. Each one of them had a room inside this castle, which had—it was a castle built by the Crusaders, but restored by the fascists, because Rhodes was part of the islands that were taken by Italy in the first World War. So they were restored by the fascists.

Vagales's room was decorated red and green, and there were diamonds, red and green diamonds painted on the walls that were about—well, the walls were 20 feet high. The room was enormous. It was a room in a castle. And there were these diamonds. Each one of them must have been two feet high. You couldn't go in the room at night, because the light was so terrible that the red and green would flicker.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. That's right.

VICTORIA BARR: His friend had a room with—imagine yellow and blue stripes. Each stripe was a foot wide. It was

grotesque. It really gave you an idea of the fascist mentality.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did the patterns come from, though, and the colors?

VICTORIA BARR: They were fascist fantasies. That's what they were.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Op art.

VICTORIA BARR: Op art. Right. But they were horrible. They were really horrible. Their rooms looked over the park down below the castle, where there was the [Inaudible.] every night. So that when they—they had to close the windows of their rooms, the shutters, so that the light from their rooms wouldn't fall out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And if you looked out of the windows, you could see the castle walls were like two or three feet thick. There were these groups of cables for all the lights.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: For the [Inaudible.]. Of course, I had all sorts of fantasies of what they could do, diving out the window during the [Inaudible.] without any clothes on, and so on and so forth.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: None of which they did, because they were being paid by the government. So they had to behave themselves. But anyway, they were interesting and they were nice people. And we spent a lot of time together.

I also met some people who had a boat. They were Americans and Canadians who were on this boat with—the so-called captain of the boat was a doctor from Long Island who was not in terribly good physical or mental health. He had thought that he would sail the Aegean during the winter,—this was in March and April, early April—only to discover that the Aegean was really terribly dangerous in the wintertime. So they pulled into the harbor in Rhodes and spent the winter together in this sailboat. And they had—I mean, speaking of cabin fever, they were desperate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How strange. Oh, wow.

VICTORIA BARR: When they met me, I was very lucky. I mean, they were eager for friendship, as was I. And they said, "Well, we're about to sail for the first time all winter, to Crete. We would like you to come with us for the weekend," just down to Crete for the weekend. "You can fly back." I said, "Well, that sounds great." And so they had to ask the captain, who was very difficult and who was usually onshore drinking himself to death. They felt that he might have been dying, which was—he evidently had terrible stomach problems. And they felt that he might have been literally taking a last voyage before either dying in Greece or going back to—I think they thought he had cancer.

But anyway, needless to say, he was a very—he was the kind of captain that was so dangerous that they were constantly manipulating him so that they could really say where the boat should go. They were the people that decided that they should spend a winter in the harbor in Rhodes.

[END REEL 4 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Side 8.

VICTORIA BARR: We did go to Crete together. They forced him to agree, I think. It was very thrilling for me, the trip. It was just an overnight trip. And we did in fact get caught in a very serious storm, which somehow or other I managed to sleep through. I'm just as glad.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I did find out a lot about sailing at that time in terms of the life. At that time of year there are very few boats around. People know about one another, and they had either met in previous islands or they have heard about one another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: When we arrived in Crete, they already knew some people there. They had planned to try and contract Peraz [ph] to see whether they could get another job. So when we got to Crete, the first thing they did was to go to the telegraph office and see if there were any telegraphs, which they were. And they had in fact all been hired for other jobs.

What they did is, they mutinied. They virtually mutinied in Crete, sent me off. This was in Heraklion. Sent me off for a drink, said they would join me later, and told me to find a hotel for myself, all of which was fine. Then they went, and they said—they gave the captain an ultimatum. They said, "Either we leave you here and we will get back to Athens by ourselves, or we will sail you directly back to Athens rather than continue a tour or begin a tour through the islands." So he said, "Okay. Send me back to Athens." They came and had dinner with me. And we said good-bye. They went off the next day and I flew back to Rhodes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were these people a crew? Or were they friends?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, they were the crew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were the crew, I mean, a hired crew.

VICTORIA BARR: A crew of three. A Canadian husband and wife, and an American man, who were really at their wits end. And I think it's just as well that they left, because they felt that the man was dying or that there was a serious, a very serious situation going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Which they were not told about. So aside from the fact that they thought he was a dangerous, you know, did not know the Aegean at all, it was probably good that they left.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do any work while you were in Greece?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What?

VICTORIA BARR: I did. I did a lot of watercolors. And mostly what I did was pastels.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I drew the Greek landscape. Particularly on Rhodes, I would go out on my bike from the city of Rhodes, where I stayed, and go along the coast at Face, Turkey [ph], which is very flat and beautiful to bike along, where the sea was a sort of pale emerald green, with a lot of sand mixed in. Then there were strips of deep purple, and then the normal Aegean aquamarine blue.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Interspersed between these more exotic shades. It was just extraordinary and the almond trees were in bloom. I was there for Easter and went with Vagales to a village by the sea called Paradisi, believe it or not. He made poppy wreaths for us to wear on our heads. It was extraordinarily beautiful, just really a paradise. Paradisi, the village, was painted ultramarine blue. The whole village was ultramarine blue. We ate in a taverna right by the sea, where the sea was this pale blue-green. And there were windows everywhere, just like in Crete. It was amazing, the most beautiful landscape, just beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is it important for you to have a beautiful natural image to work from? [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it was then, except that I always said to myself, "Why?" You know, "Why are you working from this? It's so beautiful you could never make anything as beautiful as this." So there was a certain irony involved, which I still believe. I think that—and also, in the 20th century what is somebody doing, you know, painting directly from nature? It's fine when you're young. It was a very aesthetic experience and very poetic. But I knew. I knew that it wasn't right for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It wasn't going to last.

VICTORIA BARR: No. Absolutely not.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think gave you that intuition? Just history?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. The Impressionists were lucky. I felt that my work was irrelevant. I feel now that that was a period where I was really basically exploring the world. I was somewhat foxed in my ambitions by finding myself in Europe, although God knows Greece was really amazing. I still love it. You know, I still think about it. But—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do say the Impressionists were lucky?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because they were, quote, "able" to work from nature and make something and say something that had never been said before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I don't think that can be done anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean the landscape has changed so much? The people have changed? The world has shifted?

VICTORIA BARR: Art has changed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Art has changed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I think that the landscape painting that is being done now—and I hate to make a sweeping condemnation—I think it's nostalgic. Although I would like some of it—I mean, I wouldn't mind having a Jane Freilicher of Long Island, where I spent time and which I do think is rather beautiful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's a memento rather than intimate experience.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

Also, I like photography quite a lot, and I think that maybe photographs, in some way, have more validity. I just feel that it's not possible to paint from nature anymore, that it is not relevant, to use that old phrase. It's just simply not relevant. I think that nature can inspire. I feel that the energy that I felt in Greece, the sort of combination of spiritual and physical energy, affected me deeply and forever. But the work that I did then, I don't—I mean, I like it. And when I look at it, I still remember the day in which I did something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Other from that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It doesn't.

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, to get you back here, since we are, as you say, taking forever.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. Listen, I just have to say about Lillianne. I haven't said anything about Lillianne.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. No, right. Did you meet her here in New York or in Paris?

VICTORIA BARR: No. Well, I met her—I wanted to talk about Lillianne Lijn. I met her first in New York when Takis had a show. It was in the very early '60s or late '50s, with Farman, Iris Owens, and Burrows. And then Takis knew—when I was in Paris, Takis knew that I was going to Greece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aha.

VICTORIA BARR: He said, "My wife Lillianne is there" and we met in Athens. She was living in a house which was partially built, called—in a shantytown outside of Athens called [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Where they had taken the land overnight and built some of the building the way every other person who lived in that shantytown did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But that was the only way that you could claim the land and the building for yourself, was to do it overnight. So, they had built this building, which was Mycenaean in character, curved and overlooking this shantytown. I mean, it wasn't really—it wasn't like just metal boards or anything. It was more built than that. But it was very modest, very, very modest. Their place was called the factory and was bigger and, in fact, quite fancy, except a lot of it was built underground. You didn't have that impression from the outside, which was just as well not to have it be too ostentatious. Since it was a working-class area, it would have been very bad, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Takis and Lillianne understood that. And Lillianne and I formed our friendship there. She was working on the house and working on her own work. She was making some of the combs with poetry on them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And we used to talk about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The prayer wheels.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And we just liked one another a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I re-met her on another trip to Greece, because I kept leaving Greece and going back again. We spent three weeks in Mykonos. She was there with her son, Thanos. We spent extraordinary—had an extraordinary time in Mykonos with some of the other Fulbright people who showed up, like David Funt and Bob Fiore [ph] showed up. We did a lot of dancing, the hasapiko and other Greek dances, a lot of drinking. And we got to know a lot of island people.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was one of the best times I've ever spent in my life. It was just fantastic. So, we—Lillianne came back to Paris a second year and we continued to see one another constantly. Takis was there and Raymondos was there. That was good. That—Lillianne's friendship really changed my life in Paris.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because she knows everybody.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. And we had a lot to say to one another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: We really liked one another a lot. And then Raymondos and I went down to Rome and had an exhibition together under the wing of Caresse Crosby.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. How did that happen?

VICTORIA BARR: That was difficult. Well, he was very friendly with Caresse and she was staying in her castle at [Inaudible.]. We arrived with our stuff and unfortunately, her days of presiding in the arts and knowing what was going on were over. The gallery was dismal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, about 20 years. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. The gallery was really dismal. It was a great disappointment. She and Raymondos went off to Greece after the opening, which was messed up by the fact that there was a mail strike and that there were holidays. It was in June, and it was on [Inaudible.], which closed everything down for three days in a row. I will hand it to her. When she found out that none of the invitations to the opening had arrived, she sat down for a day and called everybody she knew in the area.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens.

VICTORIA BARR: So we had a good opening. But I just have to savor. Piero De Rotsio [ph] was there, a friend. At the end of the show, the woman who ran the gallery said, "You must leave one painting for me and one painting for the critic." I was ready and willing to leave a pastel for each of them, but not a painting. She had not opened the gallery some afternoons. She really let us down. And Piero came by in his station wagon, and we literally

went into the gallery, took the paintings off the wall, put them in the station wagon, and drove away.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Leaving her standing at the door saying, "You're young enough to be my daughter." Little did she realize that she was insulting herself, because by then I was in my late 20s.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I looked very young. Rothko was in Rome at that time, came to see the show. And Cy Twombly and David Whitney were there. So anyway, that's a whole other—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had lots of—

VICTORIA BARR: Lots of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. It was—again, there were people there, but it was terribly difficult. Lillianne was not there. But anyhow, that's how I became friendly with Lillianne and have felt that way ever since.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just brought her a letter on Sunday.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: That's the end of my—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of that segment?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So anyway, in 1966, the Fulbright was over and you did come back to New York.

VICTORIA BARR: To New York, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do? What were your plans? Did you have any, or did you just come back because it was over?

VICTORIA BARR: I came back because it was over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And had to think about what's next?

VICTORIA BARR: What to do next. I got a job at the Museum of Natural History. I eventually moved to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of job did you get there?

VICTORIA BARR: In the exhibitions department. Moved to 168-1/2 Delancey Street, which was a loft that belonged first to Sven Luken and then to Michael Helminski, who went to work for McGarrell in Indiana. I took the loft, sublet the loft.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was Red Grooms's once.

VICTORIA BARR: And Red Grooms was there earlier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Earlier. The Delancey Street Museum.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Earlier, four or five years earlier.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I didn't realize that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Jackie Ferrera was in the building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was very dilapidated, overlooking Williamsburg Bridge, and I worked full-time. It was hard,

interfered with my painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you had, what, nights and weekends?

VICTORIA BARR: Nights and weekends—not enough for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can't get the continuity going?

VICTORIA BARR: No. So—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, did your work change as you left Paris and came back here?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, in a sense. Well, what happened was it gradually—I was still doing the landscapes, the layered landscapes. But I kept doing them and doing them and they became more ordered.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean "ordered"?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, they became less—let's put it this way. Let's say they became less painterly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. You mean flatter surfaces?

VICTORIA BARR: They became flatter, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Brushstroke and—

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I was influenced by hard-edge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Well, Allan D'Arcangelo made a great impression on me, and maps, that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you were kind of going away from nature into—

VICTORIA BARR: More abstract, more conception—the conception of a landscape rather than, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The actual representation of it?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But did Greece or Paris affect the color ever, the light?

VICTORIA BARR: Not particularly, no. Strangely enough, it didn't, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For how long were you on Delancey Street then?

VICTORIA BARR: About a year. I had to leave because of Michael was going to come back. That's when I moved to 14th Street.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Here?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So '68?

VICTORIA BARR: Seven.

PAUL CUMMINGS: '67?

VICTORIA BARR: '67-'68. It was '68. Yeah, so it would have been '68. I taught at Barnard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, when did that start?

VICTORIA BARR: That started in the fall of '67, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the Natural History Museum was only about a year or less?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Yes. Yes, that's right. Because I knew it wasn't going to work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you want to teach, or was that a practical alternative?

VICTORIA BARR: No. Practical alternative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. How did you find Barnard? Was it easy getting—it wasn't easy getting jobs in those days, was it?

VICTORIA BARR: Fairly. Certainly easier than it is now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. Oh, I know now it's terrible because they're cutting back everywhere so much.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Oh, it's much worse now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you apply lots of places?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I was very lucky. I got the job at a cocktail party. I was very bored.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Better than the *New York Times* ad, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, right, much.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I was really, really bored at this party. I decided that I would ask around, see if anybody had any work. Barbara Novak was there, who was working at Barnard. I said, "I'm looking for a job." And she said, "I think we may have one for you." So I went, and I got hired there, and I got hired at Hunter also.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: But that was a job that only lasted for a semester, at Hunter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At Hunter.

VICTORIA BARR: Whereas the Barnard thing has lasted ever since.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what did you do at Hunter? Because that was a short one.

VICTORIA BARR: At Hunter, I taught one of the basic courses in the art section.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A studio course?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And what about Barnard?

VICTORIA BARR: I taught a studio course that was part of an art history course. And in 1968 or '69—let's see. Yeah, the spring of 1969 there were such terrible—there were terrible riots at Columbia. There had been in '68 also, terrific riots. This is relevant in the sense that I was told at Barnard that Barnard would make a regular painting course which I would then teach, and that the studio course that was attached to the art history course, we all felt, was not really appropriate. But the students didn't want it. Instead, in the spring of '69, Julius Held came to me and said—he was the head of the department, not Barbara—"We have decided to discontinue the studio course attached to the art history course. But we are not going to have a painting course after all."

I, of course, was left high and dry in the spring without a job for the following year. I was teaching a lot of hours at that time and was extremely upset. So, life went on and the riots occurred again. Somebody appeared from Barnard, a student called Laurie Anderson, who is now a quite successful artist in her own right, and said—she was in art history. She was an art history major—and said, "I hear that you were destined to teach a painting course, et cetera, and that you aren't going to. I am going to pass a petition around and see if, as a student liaison, between Barnard and the faculty, the students and the faculty, I can't get that course going." And she did. She was successful, astonishingly successful and is one of the few examples of anything around left over from that period of extreme tumult.

There were never any riots at Barnard, but it had to close down. I think it closed down every year until the Vietnam War was over. It closed down every spring from 1968 until, I think, 1974 or '75, from the riots at Columbia. Then they shifted the schedule and the war was over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, I always tell my students at Barnard now that the class was made by students for students, and I got my job back because of the students. I have a very special feeling about my job there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what is the class? Has it changed a lot over the years?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And what you do and the kind of students you have, your approach, what their needs are, what the curriculum—

[END OF REEL4 SIDE B.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right. This is side 9. It's the 9th of February 1977, Paul Cummings talking to Victoria Barr in her studio on 14th Street.

But you did want to speak about the riots at Columbia and how they affected Barnard and you and the people around and the whole ambiance at the time?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What you felt was important about them and how they continued for several years and different degrees.

VICTORIA BARR: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You also said you wanted to talk about the fact that there was some student activity to revive your department, or your job, or something.

VICTORIA BARR: I said that I wanted to talk about it, or did I talk about it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who? What? When? Character? Story?

VICTORIA BARR: If I say Laurie Anderson, does that ring a bell?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You mentioned that she was one of the people who was involved with that. But anyway, you want to start with the riots.

VICTORIA BARR: I'm still feeling a little confused about—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, if it duplicates, don't worry.

VICTORIA BARR: If it duplicates, it doesn't matter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't worry, no. Just clarify. The riots came first, though, right?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, the riots, yeah. They came first, and they were against the war and against the university.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There were several issues involved, one of the most specific being whether Columbia should build a gymnasium that would—part of which would be in the Morningside Heights Park, Morningside Park, because there were—it was a very sensitive period for so-called town/gown relationships, relations. And the students rebelled—the student rebellion was, of course, against Columbia building a gym. And the riots were quite violent. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, were you involved with any of them or see any of them?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I was not. Well, I mean, I saw it. When you came up out of the subway, the streets of around Broadway and 116th Street were filled with police. There were mounted police all up and down, let's say, from 118th Street down to 113th Street, all with helmeted cops, and the schools closed. Barnard closed, eventually. It was extremely exciting and quite frightening. I—Barnard was involved, but never—there were no riots at Barnard the way there were at Columbia.

The interesting thing that happened at Barnard, which is a school where the faculty do not talk easily to one another and where people go to class in relative isolation—. It's rather formal that way. When the riots came, everybody spoke to everybody else in the halls. You know, teachers, people were overwhelmed, confused. There

was a tremendous amount of confusion.

The thing about them that remains in my mind is two things. I may have said this before. But anyway, it doesn't matter, as you said. That is that the schools that I was most concerned about, although as I was a very new, really very young teacher, only teaching part-time, I can't say that I felt a very close involvement. But anyway—was the fact that at a certain point, the students said that there would be no more art history. This is, of course, the rebellion and I felt that this was a very, very repressive and extremely dangerous way of thinking. It was then that I began to see, again, that this kind of really extreme radicalism was, reaching around the other end, the other side to become as repressive as any kind of fascist movement.

I was extremely shocked by this. And I—now, you know, it would be interesting to discuss it with people who were around then. I mean, I never found out any of the facts. That seemed to be enough for me.

Meanwhile, what happened subsequently was that every single year until very recently, I think until 1974, if not until 1975, but I don't know my dates—there were riots. There was—Kent State still had to come and the invasion of Cambodia and all sorts of issues. I never finished a semester for something like the first four or five years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the spring, because of the—

VICTORIA BARR: In the spring because of the riots.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I used to, well, disband my class. I mean, we needed the room and as I lived first on Delancey Street and then on 14th Street, they were going to come down and study with me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, it was always incomplete, which was too bad. But I kept telling them that it was a more important education for them to find out what the riots were than practically anything I could teach them. I don't feel that way now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think you did that?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, because I feel that—I guess what it is, is that they produced—the riots produced an overt and very highly visible, highly tangible reaction to the more general political situation in the country. I felt that this was history in the making in a very—in a way that no—I always had the sense that when you're in school, you know, you're basically doing your three Rs. I'm putting school down again, as usual.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And life is—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And why do you do that?

VICTORIA BARR: Life does not intrude very much, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's not supposed to, particularly, at a certain point.

VICTORIA BARR: It's not supposed to. But at the same time, I think that they would witness something and participate in something if they wished that they might never, ever do again in their lifetime over issues that I felt were extremely important. I actually questioned the rebellion against the institution on the level of violence that had existed.

But I felt that it was extremely important to protest the Vietnam War, which I feel was probably in the 20th century the single most disgusting thing that's ever happened in this country. I'm not sure that—I mean, I know I feel very strongly that riots against Columbia was not the way to go about it. But anyway, at that time, people were so desperate, so desperate about the war and about Columbia's involvement with various—what was it? Saran Wrap? The people who made some of the—oh, Christ. Let me see if I can remember. Napalm.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Napalm, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. That they—I mean, I don't have my facts straight. You know, I'd have to read them again to get them all straight. But they were involved with Columbia or Columbia was backing projects and things like that.

Of course, this was all extremely confusing. It's like, Watts, you want to burn down your own home to protest something? I feel that this is essentially very masochistic. But nevertheless—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true. Also, it shows how easy it is for a few people to manipulate large crowds of people.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which basically that was.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it was. Nevertheless, I think that—I feel that the marches on Washington were much more important. But as my course came out of this period, I would also like to say that this—I mean, it was one of the good things, my course was one of the good things that happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, I felt that it was much more important for them to find out what the issues were, understand them, witness, participate than it was for me—you see, at that time the political climate of the country was in such a state of upheaval, between the assassinations, either which had either happened or were about to happen, and the continuing demoralization about the war, that it was really a time in my life where, as I had never had this kind of experience or any equivalent kind of experience in my life before, I was at my wit's end because I was against the war. That goes without saying, since I've said all of this before.

But the one thing I really knew how to do was to paint. I had to consider, which I did again and again during those years, whether going back down to Delancey Street and painting was enough. The principle behind it being that, if—this is, of course, particularly true being a woman, that if—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you differentiate?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I will say in a second.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: But that perhaps as I did not know very much about organizing groups of people, as I did not have extraordinary—not extraordinary, but I didn't have the kind of political savvy that I thought a lot of other people did around me—I'm now not sure they did. But I did then think so. That the best thing that I could do was to go home and paint, considering—you know, send my students off to where the action was, but as I felt against certain aspects of the action that maybe the only thing to do was simply to go home and do what I was best at because, if I had been involved continually, in other words, daily in the peace movement, my situation would have been such that I would have been typing, which I can't do, or mimeographing. And the reason that this is so is, one: I didn't know how to do anything else, and two: because I was a woman. I'm absolutely convinced of this.

Therefore—I mean, it would have been different if, we were—I don't know how to say this because I know that—it's just that the Vietnam War was very far away. It wasn't like being in a country where the war was going on, where you did anything. You wrapped bandages or you worked as a volunteer in a hospital. You did anything. You know, you just dropped everything and went out. It was more a political and intellectual and emotional situation.

And so—and of course, what I'm really leading into is that my attitude—and I was extremely torn, just terribly torn—led into one of the reasons that I felt that it was so important for women's liberation to—for me to become involved with the Women's Liberation Movement, because it came directly out of the peace movement. All the women who worked in the peace movement, and then one fine day they said, "My God! You know, men are as oppressive." This, of course, was an exaggeration—"but as oppressive to us as the United States is to Vietnam." This was a gross exaggeration. But obviously, they were getting very sick of not being able to speak up at meetings, and maybe—I mean, I would also like to add, maybe realizing that the way they were brought up made them not very adept politically, that they were brought up not to be like that, not to think like that.

Well, I know you're shaking your head. But I know this is so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I know women who are brought up politically and they would shake their heads.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. They would shake their heads, but there were very few of them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Paula Zahn.

VICTORIA BARR: Hm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paula Zahn.

VICTORIA BARR: Very few.

PAUL CUMMINGS: True.

VICTORIA BARR: And that's—well, that's shocking. That's really shocking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are very few men, too.

VICTORIA BARR: No. There were lots of men. Lots. I mean, they may not have been—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They made up the body, but there were only a few who really did the thinking and haranguing and the speechmaking and became the leaders. Those people are leaders.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. But anyhow, I still think that—I do understand why the women's movement came out of the peace movement, and with women's disillusionment at either the men's attitude towards them or their realization of the fact that they were—of their own incapacities. I mean, it depends on how you want to look at it. It's probably a mixture of both. But anyhow. So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So was that a period you got more involved?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I mean, I did things in the peace movement. I did go down to Washington, and I marched in New York. But I mean, I wasn't as active as I would have liked to be because I found that there was so much hostility towards me at that time—

PAUL CUMMINGS: From what sources?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it was around. I don't want to name names.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but I mean, what kind of people? Were they from academics or students or social friends or other artists?

VICTORIA BARR: Other artists and people that I knew. No, not students. Despite the fact that there were all these riots at Columbia, it was amazing how apolitical my students were, for the most part. I think—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Humanities students usually are.

VICTORIA BARR: Usually, yes. I think that probably there were students at Barnard who were very politically active. But they weren't around taking painting courses. That's what I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

VICTORIA BARR: So it was very insulated, even though it was across the street.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Even though it was forced to close down. It was curious. It was very curious.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How near, but how far.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's one of the joys of New York, in a way.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. I could be down on Delancey Street and come up out of the 7th Seventh IRT on 116th and Broadway and didn't know whether the entire street would be covered with teargas. I mean, it was extraordinary. It really was amazing. But I could have lunch in the middle of town with somebody who was working in an office, and I would have come to a place that was in the total state of upheaval.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Eighty blocks away or something, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. It was just amazing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, you did mention something about—what was her name, Anderson?

VICTORIA BARR: Laurie.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Laurie Anderson.

VICTORIA BARR: Well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened then?

VICTORIA BARR: I think that I said this before. But I'll say it again in case I skipped it, because it's important. I'll just say it very briefly. She—

PAUL CUMMINGS: She got a petition up or something.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. So that I was reinstated at Barnard to teach a painting course as opposed to a studio course that was designed to make up exercises that concerned a basic art history course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right. It was a pure painting course rather than an example course for art historians.

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So anyhow, I will—all I can say—and I think I probably said it earlier, was that I'm, you know, like really thankful to her. I have been doing this ever since. It was something very positive that came out of that period and that it was a course made by students for students. I had nothing—I had nothing—I could not do anything to get—I tried everything I could do myself to get back, to get my job back. And she was the person, really—that the students did have power then, and they were also very concerned, maybe in a way that they aren't now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: There was a lot of vitality then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which doesn't seem to be around now. There isn't that—or if it is, it's manifested totally—

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it's more stable. It's much more stable. It gives people a chance to develop themselves in a less—in a—I'd be hard-pressed to choose which is a better period.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they're different. They each have their attributes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how have you found that—because you've been teaching there for, what, 10 years about?

VICTORIA BARR: About.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find the students change a great deal every year?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does your program change a lot?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you change it much?

VICTORIA BARR: I change it all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I do have some basic things that I do, but the students seem more talented. Now, that simply may be that I've lucked out recently. I get along with them better. Although I know that I am now much older than they are, I feel closer to them than I did then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: I feel more friendly and I feel like I can talk to them woman to woman, as one would used to say man to man, that kind of thing. I feel very equal with them, which is something that I've always tried to attain, that I don't want to be in there in a position of authority, although I do every now and then say something

that is directly critical. Like often I'll say, "Look. You should be painting bigger. Your painting is going to work better if it's bigger," you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Or I'll say, "Now, I feel that copying from this greeting card is a waste of time." And I'll tell them why.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I like them. I like them better than I used to I think maybe simply because I'm older. I don't know what it is. Or maybe I do feel more separate now, which is good, whereas when I was younger, I used to come into the class and nobody knew who the teacher was, which was terribly flattering when I was 35.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: But it was sort of a disadvantage in a way, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you've never had very large classes.

VICTORIA BARR: Would you like some wine now, or some more tea?

PAUL CUMMINGS: [No audible response]

Do you find it advantageous then to be older?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In all ways?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Help. I mean, in terms of the students.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I do. I do. And I don't understand why it should be. As I am older, I feel closer. I do have a very good memory of what it was like to be that young.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that have—you mean, when you were a young art student at that age?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right. Did you find it more difficult when you were a young teacher, starting the first few years when you were only, say, four or five years older than the students?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of discipline or running the class?

VICTORIA BARR: No, it was all as I started out, and I was about eight years older than the students.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

VICTORIA BARR: No, there was no problem with discipline. They are very disciplined there. I was scared. I didn't want to teach.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that makes—

VICTORIA BARR: Made it very hard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I only started liking it—I think—I know. I remember now. The reason that it's gotten easier is that last year, so that's just two years, I decided that I liked to teach. It took me a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Seven or eight years?

VICTORIA BARR: A long time, right. All of a sudden, I like it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it makes a lot of difference if you like what you're doing.

VICTORIA BARR: I really do. I mean, I ran the gamut of trying to change jobs, fantasizing of different things I could do to make money. There was one wonderful idea I had, which I still think is a great idea. And that was I wanted to open a bar, a bar and a place to go dancing, that would be like a club for artists. In other words, it wouldn't be invaded the way Max's ultimately was by people from Queens.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are everywhere. You've got to be careful.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. I realized that, as usual, many of the ideas that I have, I just couldn't do because they took up too much time and energy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, it always came back to that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were you painting when you started teaching? What was your painting like? Was it still landscapes? Had it shifted?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. It was still the filmstrip type landscapes. What happened there was that they became the paintings, became more and more refined.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Meaning what in terms of the imagery?

VICTORIA BARR: Meaning that they—the colors became graded like Chinese landscapes, where you have hills with different gradations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Each tone means another space, plane?

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly, exactly. So I was mixing colors and different tones of blue, different tones of gray, that they became more under the influence of hard-edge, which was around at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: They became much more abstract. You could still see. You know, you could still see that they were landscapes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But there were no—everything was sort of smoothed out. The drawing was all smoothed out. There were very few instances where you could point and say, "Well, that's obviously rocks and cliffs." You know, they were all much more abstracted. They looked a bit like charts more than anything else. They were very—almost a borderline between design and—like design, maps. And they were difficult to do. They were just very difficult to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, somewhere in the later '60s, there was a change, wasn't there?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about that?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, what happened was that I just stopped. When I would go into the studio to paint—and I had all these gradations of grays and they really had to be perfect. I really had to be perfect. I'd paint for about a half-an-hour and then I'd fall asleep.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was so intense?

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. I don't think it was very intense.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I'm not sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something happened.

VICTORIA BARR: Something happened and I'd fall asleep. So I became rather upset about this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Went around spoke to friends, and everybody thought it was wonderful in that they said, "You're going through a period of transition, and you mustn't worry about it. And everything is going to be all right. Go out and have a good time."

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what? I mean, just living or work or—

VICTORIA BARR: In terms of my work. Forget it. Just let it go.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Keep on going and see what happens.

VICTORIA BARR: No. don't. Stop. Stop working.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: Because, like I said, well, I'm falling asleep in the studio all the time. And they said, "Well, in that case, just go out and have yourself a good time." Of course, it was very easy to do in those days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Because there was—oh, I can't remember it anymore. There was a bar in the building that collapsed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Remington's.

VICTORIA BARR: On Broadway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Remington's, wasn't it?

VICTORIA BARR: Remington's came a little later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the early one. The florist?

VICTORIA BARR: The early one, owned by the people who then opened Remington's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. I remember.

VICTORIA BARR: And it was in the Grants—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Broadway Central Hotel.

VICTORIA BARR: Broadway Central Hotel, which ultimately collapsed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It fell into the street one day.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. Fortunately after—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. I remember that terrible place.

VICTORIA BARR: Used to go there, go to Max's—terrific. The Annex of Max's that had a wonderful-something country club.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it had lots of names.

VICTORIA BARR: Wonderful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was Levine's one time.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Across the street, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. It was a fine time. I mean, people were really out, you know, really out. Everybody was out on the town all the time and getting to know everybody else. It was a very exciting, very free time despite the fact—I mean, in the art world, of course, to counter the troubles, the political troubles in the country, there was lots of money. Everybody had at least a little bit of money. So everybody was out there—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Living it up!

VICTORIA BARR: Living it up, spending it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Going to the Hamptons, Vermont, up in the country, down to the beach, off to Europe, California.

VICTORIA BARR: I was just thinking—I mean, even the poorer artists were able—you know, able to go out. People would have groups, and everybody was, you know, up on the latest thing. God knows what it was then. But it was really a great time and a wonderful time not to be able to work. I don't know what I'd do with myself now if I got into that situation again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Get involved with everything. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I went around, and I spoke to some people like—well, I spoke to—John Chamberlain was here, and I spoke to him. He was my next-door neighbor, and he said, "It's okay, you know." Bill Copley, he said the same thing. It was—I mean, I must say I was terribly worried. But it all passed. I went out to New Mexico that summer to Santa Fe and I lived at 226 Artist Road when I was in Santa Fe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific!

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I was so embarrassed by the address that I couldn't write anybody for three weeks because I was afraid they would laugh at me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They would say, "Victoria has done it again."

VICTORIA BARR: I know. It turned out to be a really horribly arty town. I did not like Santa Fe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's so phony.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, God.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like the Washington Square art show of cactus and sand.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, exactly. It's just so bad. Oh, God, it's so bad. But I had a very amazing time there. It was for me—first of all, I will say, just to continue on the level of my painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was going around to a lot of galleries while still in New York that spring. That would have been—I probably—the summer I'm referring to is the spring of—the summer of '69, I think. Anyway, it's '68 or '69.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was looking and I began to feel that what I needed to do, as these paintings, these previous paintings were very diagrammatic, was to somehow break loose to something that was more freely expressive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Total contrast, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that's exactly what I did. The two paintings that influenced me was—Helen Frankenthaler, whose work I had always liked, influenced me. And I saw a couple of Woffords up at Dick Bellamy's uptown. What's the name of that guy that he used to be—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Goldowsky.

VICTORIA BARR: Noah Goldowsky and Dick's. And they were—I didn't think that they were all that great, but they did influence me. So when I got out to New Mexico, at 226 Artist Road, I started doing stain painting. Believe me, that was a major change from the previous landscapes. It's ironic, too, because the light in New Mexico, particularly by—I'm having a lot of trouble remembering things tonight. What's the name of the place

where they made the A-bomb?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Los Alamos.

VICTORIA BARR: Los Alamos. The hills behind Los Alamos, the sun used to set behind Los Alamos if you were in Santa Fe. And the hills there were exactly like my paintings, in that they were dark blue, middle dark blue, pale middle dark blue, pale blue, and almost white as the sun went down. There would be these beautiful gradations. I would look at them and think, "Ah! Beautiful! Why didn't I come out here last summer?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, maybe that's the reason.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, yeah. So, I was there and the summer was extraordinarily difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: Very interesting. Very briefly, when I went to New Mexico, as when I leave New York in the summer, one of the things that I look forward to, is the fact that I'm leaving the city violence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: The second or third night that I was in Santa Fe, I was walking home from the movies late at night, and the police stopped us and asked us if we had seen a suspicious-looking man in the street. I was with a woman friend of mine and the police said, "Well, there's just been a rape up the street." You know, it was really shattering for me, because I realized that, you know, I've been walking down the streets of Santa Fe completely oblivious to the possible dangers, of which there were many. It was a very violent small city at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Which I knew nothing about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Still is.

VICTORIA BARR: I guess maybe it is, yeah. So anyway, also the thing that was infuriating was that I was very frightened to hear this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So I said to the police, who were in the car, "Would you please give us a ride home, or give us a ride to the police station, or to a taxi stand?" And they said, "No, we can't, because it will take us out of our area."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, well, we got home all right. But anyway, that was just a preview of what was to come. I had another friend who was working at the Santa Fe Opera. And the Santa Fe Opera had burnt down about two summers before. It had been set by arson. My friend was not there then, but this was still very fresh in everybody's minds, in that it was a brand-new theater. So, there was a suspicious fire that summer also and there were various other tribulations, which I won't go into. But anyway, up at the Opera House, so that he was also very, very tense.

Then the other thing that was going on was that there were—this was the sort of last moment of the very, very strong hippie movements around in the West.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. The communes were falling apart.

VICTORIA BARR: No, they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they were beginning to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, one of them was falling apart, but most of them were really in full bloom.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well—well, some places, I guess. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Where I went, they were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: The only problem was that—I don't know; maybe this is what you're getting at—and that is that

they couldn't get off the ground because they did not have the knowledge that it took in order to build the equivalent of a small town.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right. Then they had no social structure. They kept breaking it down.

VICTORIA BARR: They had no social structure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So anyway, there were lots of hippies around. They did not like to be called that, the ones that had settled on communes. So what were they? Communards? I don't know what to say, but they made a very strong distinction.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Middle-class domestics.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's what they were trying to be.

VICTORIA BARR: They were fugitives. Of course, they were fugitives from the middle class. I had several experiences with them that left a very strong impression on me. One of them was that John Chamberlain was out there making a movie.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: He had a friend there called Max Feinstein, who was a poet of sorts, not a very good poet. But he had started the first really strong commune around Taos and Santa Fe called New Buffalo. He was spending a lot of time with John making the movie. I participated in this movie and had asked Max if I could go and visit New Buffalo because I was extremely curious about what was going on out there. And I said, "But you must tell me, you know, what I can do." Also, I was very concerned because I was a painter. Again, I was a painter, and was there a situation on a commune for a painter? Would I have to erase my life in order to function on a commune? Not that I was planning to go and live on one, but how would I be received?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: He looked at me, and he said, "You are too commercial. We do not want anybody like you around." Which was a real blow, and I mean, one of many that I was to receive during that period. The irony of it was that I hadn't sold a painting in years and was not at all commercial.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you tell him that?

VICTORIA BARR: No, I didn't. I was too shy. I didn't have the—you know, I didn't have the guts to talk.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he was hanging around with Chamberlain, who had a—

VICTORIA BARR: Was very commercial.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —had a career going. The ambiguity is a little apparent.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. It was a real put-down. It was a real put-down.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Too bad. Also, I think he was very put off by the fact that I was so well spoken and that obviously I was a member of the establishment because of my beautiful accent.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Amongst other things maybe.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. So, that was where I really started having to deal with the fact of, you know, how well born I was and how well educated I was, and how refined I was, and all of that. I mean, I could—I thought that the communes were extremely fascinating.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you get to any finally?

VICTORIA BARR: I could tell you stories that would fill this entire time. Now, I don't know any history.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm really more interested in what they meant to you and what you found out there were in fact or in fantasy.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. All right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And if it became something important or it was an experience, and you said, "Well, that's it" and finished.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. Yeah. They were very—they were on a philosophical level very—and political level, very important. They made a deep, deep impression on me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you visit any, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I did. And went to—I never did get to New Buffalo. I did go to Drop City in Southern Colorado, which was falling apart.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. It got dropped.

VICTORIA BARR: It got dropped. I had a very shocking conversation with somebody. It was so—the thing is that I'm so—I'm still so fascinated by these places that it's very hard for me to not tell you about them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what elements intrigued you so much?

VICTORIA BARR: The Utopia that didn't work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: The terrible anguish, the disparity between the dream and the actuality. And the—I was amazed at the ignorance that existed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's the reason they all failed is the profound stupidity of so many of them, impracticality.

VICTORIA BARR: I'm not so sure it's—it's not so much stupidity, I think, as ignorance, you know, that they didn't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If they were intelligent enough, they could have found out.

VICTORIA BARR: Found out. They could have found out. Right, yeah, that's true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they didn't. It's like the chicken that starves sitting in a pile of wheat because it won't bend its head down to look around, you know.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: An old agrarian image.

VICTORIA BARR: I give you a very short story. I mean, this is a period that is so rich in stories that—but anyway. There was a young woman who passed through the house that I was living in, sent by some friends in New York. She wanted to go and live on a commune and she was very worried about what to do with herself. She'd never slept out in her life. I found myself saying—I mean, this was—the *Whole Earth Catalogue* was not available in stores yet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I kept saying, "Well, what you need is the Boy Scout manual." The thought of recommending anybody the Boy Scout manual in 1969—I really liked—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what is the *Whole Earth Catalogue* series all about?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's how to do it. This is a tin can, and this is how to make a candle holder out of it. It's the most simplistic, primitive—

VICTORIA BARR: Survival.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —survival kit. Sure.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, that had just come out. That summer I saw the first issue. It was beautiful, beautiful stuff, and many much more sophisticated ideas in it. But anyhow—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it all came from the back old men's magazines, basically, the ideas.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: "Send away for."

VICTORIA BARR: Right. And catalogues like *LL Bean* and *Sears Roebuck*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But anyhow, in Drop City, when we went, there were about four people left. I have photographs of all these domes, which were made out of the tops of cars.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, Buckminster Fuller and then the tops of cars tacked on. There were a couple of women living in one of these—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Domes.

VICTORIA BARR: —domes, I guess—domes or zomes. They were frightened because the cowboys used to drop by, and hippie women were considered fair game, which of course was completely incorrect.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The hippies never knew that.

VICTORIA BARR: They were—I don't know, very frightened by their situation there. Anyway, the thing that upset me about them was that I wanted to believe—who wouldn't?—that it was possible for a group of people to make a new society somehow. The fact was that no matter what their dreams were, what they succeeded in doing was so far below their dreams, even to the extent—I mean, I can understand wanting to go off in the woods. You know, you really don't know what to do. I mean, I can understand that. But the fact is that their pretensions were far beyond this, but they didn't realize, for instance, that the weather in northern New Mexico—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Gets rough.

VICTORIA BARR: —is severe in the wintertime. And that they had chosen to settle there—I mean, my God.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, and they also never realized that they were living in the only new society that had been started in several thousand years.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Right. So, what were they doing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were very uninformed.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, they were very much against history, weren't they?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like being against the air.

VICTORIA BARR: They were still in some ways very, very fascinating. I have—I didn't—I saw other places. I mean, I want to the Llama Foundation, for instance, which is much more together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But it was backed by money. The other places weren't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The Llama Foundation had money there, and of course, it's still going. Architecture was interesting, but not—it didn't have the vital, primitive quality of some of the other places that I saw, which were extremely exciting. Llama didn't have that. It had something else. It had stability. But it was a little too neat.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was under a glass dome all the time.

VICTORIA BARR: It was. It was a bit. What would have been good would have been to see intelligence working

with the basics, rather than the fancy stuff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway, there was a gathering of a clan over the summer solstice outside of Santa Fe in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in a place called Aspen Grove, which is a little bit ironic because later in the summer I was to flee to Aspen to take a vacation from my vacation.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Meanwhile, the setting is such that all of this stuff was going on. Santa Fe turned out to be terrible. I was, you know, going through extreme anxiety of breaking into something very new. We got wind—friends of mine and I, Michael and Sarah Jane Helminski, my friends from Yale—Michael was then married to Sarah Jane. I think we spoke about this already.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: They came out. Other friends came out. We went to the summer solstice at night. It was up in the foothills and in a small aspen valley. The place was filled with old pickup trucks and the painted school buses, the psychedelic-painted school buses, and light shows and bonfires. It looked like a gypsy gathering. And it was, again—I mean, I'm saying this again and again. There's no other word. It was terribly exciting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And everybody was around—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was carnival.

VICTORIA BARR: It was like a carnival, right. Beautiful, people seeing one another and people from California and people from Maine. It was just very romantic and extraordinary. Of course, I'm so cooped up in my studio all the time, and when I come out in the world, and I'm absolutely dazzled.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ready to go.

VICTORIA BARR: Kesey was there with the Merry Pranksters, and the Hog Farm was there, who were in residence in northern New Mexico for the summer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How chic.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: The Hog Farm had a beautiful yellow bus, but not school-bus yellow, another yellow. It was the best-painted bus. It looked a little bit like Gauguin. Kesey's was more obsessive, more like the drawings that people made when were on amphetamines and LSD, combined, very tight—white bus with very, very tight drawing on it. It said *Further* and—and anyway, I was really transfixed. I had read Tom Wolfe's book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* [New York, Random House: 1969], and, I mean, it was one of my great fantasies to do that.

I have this very strong streak, you know, of traveling and sort of gypsy romance. If I had been young now, I would have trekked around Nepal and stuff like that. I mean, it's just absolutely—except that I was very skeptical about drugs. So there was this sort of split, except that at the end of the *Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Tom Wolfe had said that Kesey had felt that he had enough of drugs. Now, I should have known better, but I didn't. So, the next day, I decided to go back. We left and went home. The next day I decided to go back, and I went by myself. I had hoped that things would still be going strong, and they were not. The only thing that I could do was to take photographs.

They had leased the land from the Indians for 24 hours. It was Indian land, and they had to get out. So everybody was leaving. I will say that the place was very neat. They left it very neat, considering the number of people that had been there and the food they must have eaten and the fires they made and everything. I went, and I hung around with the Merry Pranksters. I asked them if I could have a ride down back to Santa Fe because I was—my friends did not want to come, and so I had hitched up. They had left me at the base of the road, and I had hitched up.

There was a little, "Ah, you know," but everybody was sort of busy and everything. And finally, I said, "Okay." I got in the back of a pickup truck, which was open, and there were a lot of sleeping bags on the floor and about five people in the truck, including Kesey. The bus, *Further*, was behind us and we proceeded to leave. We went down this dirt road and it curved down, not a terrible road, but it was a narrow road.

Kesey looked back, and he said, "The bus is going too fast." We were in front of the bus and so he was right next to the cab of the pickup truck. So he leaned around, and he tapped the driver on the shoulder and said, "Slow down, and the bus will slow down behind us," whereupon we went off the road and over an embankment and hit an aspen tree. I was tossed out of the truck, and I did a somersault in the air, and I hit my forehead on the cab and fell down on the road outside the truck. I felt—I felt as if, this was it. I didn't see my life go, all my life flash in front of me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Which I believe does happen. But I did see a huge gray spark like in the comic books. You know, a great big jagged spark, just like in the comic books.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just like Roy Lichtenstein.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, like Roy Lichtenstein, of course. It was very much in my mind at that time.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I guess the gray came because the truck was gray. I thought, I said to myself, "I'm going to die." But I didn't have the—I didn't run through my life, which is too bad. But anyway, I knew I was going to die. I said, "This is it." I was very excited by being amongst all these people, except that Kesey had not been terribly gracious.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Not that he would be, but he hadn't been even really nice.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I realize that I was sort of getting a ride, but they would just as soon not have me around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I had on a white jacket. They thought I was a journalist because I was so neat. I was not particularly neat, but they thought I was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were neat compared to them.

VICTORIA BARR: Neat compared to them, exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I found myself sitting beside the truck on the road. I got up and I was okay. I cut my forehead and I looked down on the—you know, like on the front of my jacket. Of course, it would be white—and there was blood, lots of blood coming down.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Not lots of blood, but enough.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Enough to make it—

VICTORIA BARR: Enough to make it scary and I was scared. I was very shaken. And I knew that I had to get out. The bus had stopped. It did not bump into the truck. One other person had gone off into the woods. There was aspen, sort of scrub woods. And people—they were all lined up, I remember, all lined up on the edge of the road, yelling for this other person. I thought that his fall would be broken by the trees, which indeed it was. He was all right. He emerged and he was okay.

Meanwhile, there was a baby Volkswagen bug that came down and managed to get itself around the truck and around the bus. In it there was a very square family. I mean, this all seems so amazing now. But that's what they were then. They were square. A man and wife and a little girl. I looked at them, and they looked at me. They stopped to see whether, you know, everybody was all right. And I said, "Can you give me a lift into Santa Fe?" They gave me a lift and they were terribly nice. They said, "You have to go to the hospital because you need stitches." They gave me a box of Kleenex, and they took me to the hospital to the emergency ward. And they said, "Now"—they really took care of me. I mean, I had never seen them, of course. They said, "You know, do you have any friends here? Is there anybody you can notify, because you shouldn't go home by yourself." This

was untrue; I could have gotten home by myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So my friends that I was living with were at a party. They went and got my friends from the party so that when I came from having the stitches done, my friends were there in the waiting room, white as sheets.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I remember, they were much more frightened than I was. Anyway, the people—the point that I'm trying to make is that the people called the next day to see whether I wanted to see another doctor, whether they felt that I needed X-rays. Meanwhile, I seemed to have survived this experience with no stiffness, whiplash, no sprains, no broken bones, zero. And the final sort of thing about this is that I had the stitches for quite awhile. When I walked down the streets of Santa Fe, people would stop me in the street and say, "You have a really good doctor. Those stitches are so beautiful."

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: That was so weird! You have to turn the tape over, don't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

[END REEL 5 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ten. Anyway, continue.

VICTORIA BARR: All right. The one thing I want to say about Kesey—two. First, people who were involved with the summer solstice as a generalization were the most exotic hippies, person for person, that I had ever seen. Now, I have never been in California. I've never been in the Haight vicinity, but certainly more exotic-looking than around and on St. Mark's Place. Of course, they weren't living on St. Mark's Place, they were living in the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Exotic in what way, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Looking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean in terms of hair and clothes?

VICTORIA BARR: Long hair and clothing. That's, of course—I mean, I don't know. Underneath they were just from Scarsdale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Queens.

VICTORIA BARR: Queens.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were. That's the secret of all that stuff.

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe. But anyhow, they were marvelous-looking. I was very taken by them. Kesey, interestingly enough, was one of the few men there that had short hair. His hair was curly, reddish, and a little below his ear so that he looked like a cowboy. And he had on an orange shirt with white polka-dots, also very conventional for that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kerouac.

VICTORIA BARR: Maybe. Yeah. Maybe the influence there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. Yes. He played a Kerouac-type role to the people he egged on.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. That's right. That's—I never got that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Sure. Because he was much more cowboy than he was hippie.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. He was publicized by a lot of the—not to poke directly, but the people around then who were writers. And he was a writer.

VICTORIA BARR: Of course he was a writer, and I had read both his books.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was also a very shrewd manipulator, I think.

VICTORIA BARR: I think so. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I can't figure out whether he or Allen Ginsburg, ultimately, through generosity became destructive.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, do you think? I don't—well, we could get into a lot of discussion about this. I don't think Ginsburg is destructive, but I do think Kesey—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think his influences were.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, his influences.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I don't think he meant to. I think that since he could always withdraw to recapitulate, and a lot of his followers didn't know how to do that, couldn't do it. They had a lot of problems. But Kesey, I think, was much more destructive without caring. Allen cares, and he tries—

VICTORIA BARR: That's right. He cares enormously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot of all that other stuff. But all the years I've known him, there's always been this ambiguity of being the poet rabbi.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then when he became a public figure, you know, he just really got involved with it. I think for four or five years he was very irresponsible. I mean, now that he's 50 and older, it's changed.

VICTORIA BARR: But irresponsible? In what sense do you mean irresponsible? As a poet influencing young poets or as—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The figure. No.

VICTORIA BARR: Just a figure?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The figure, the public figure that the press made out of him. He got a lot of people into a lot of heavy drugs who couldn't cope with it.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Sure.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, I don't know anything about that. I'm very naïve.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I've known him for a long time and I've watched that. Oh, sure. A lot of—and I think that as he now has looked back, he has become almost the other side. But Kesey, I think, never was. I mean, he was just out to get when the getting was good.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, Kesey, yeah. I think—I mean, certainly Kesey had none of the sort of aura, the spiritual aura, of Ginsburg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he's the Neal Cassady character to all these—

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, he is. That's right. Much more, much more like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, let's get back to—

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what did you do? Did you paint there?

VICTORIA BARR: I just—I just—I must finish. I just realized that I had skipped one of the most important aspects of this encounter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One item, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that was that despite the fact that they were really concerned about the man that had gone over the top of the truck and into the trees—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Kesey did come over to me to find out whether I was okay. He came up to me and started laughing. I looked at him, and I was really just—you know, like—I was okay except that I was hysterical inside.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Shaken, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was very shaken. I looked at him, and like the gray star, he had an American flag etched on his tooth. When he smiled he said, "You're okay, you're okay," and he started laughing, the American flag seemed to expand to be like 10 inches big and obliterated his face and then reduced itself again to being on the front of his front tooth. This is, I'm sure, you know, just another manifestation of my fear and shock. But I must say that I thought that his reaction to me was probably—I resented it tremendously.

But I think that he and probably all of them were stoned. I also think that he was really frightened and that his fear came out in the form of laughter. The fact was that I was okay and I was smart enough to get out, which I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you had a chance.

VICTORIA BARR: I had a chance, yeah. But I took it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, I didn't hang around. So, anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Getting back to the painting, did you do very much that summer?

VICTORIA BARR: I did. I did do a lot that summer. I finally left Santa Fe before the summer was over. I left in the beginning of August, went to Aspen, painted up there. And the background on that painting over there, the *Double Spirit* painting—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The stained background, the sort of garland-like pink and green, I did in Aspen in somebody's backyard, in Vivi—Vivien Thomas Trimbull, Michael Trimbull's backyard. I stayed with them for a month to sort of recover from this extraordinary upheaval. I mean, there were just countless other things that I haven't even mentioned in Santa Fe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There was one visual influence there that I meant to speak about. And that was that John Conklin, this friend of mine that was working in the Santa Fe Opera, and I and Macey Lyman, who was sharing this house with me, would go to the drive-in movies in Santa Fe. One was called the Yucca, and the other was called the Pueblo. They were nicknamed the Yuck and the Pueb.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But we used to go and eat Lot'o'Burgers and chili burgers and Dr. Pepper and popcorn, buckets.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Not little bags, but buckets of popcorn, in his VW, and watch three double-features a week of movies. Because we were—we hated—we found out after three weeks we hated Santa Fe. We were very unhappy. We were lonely, except we had each other. We couldn't fit into anything. No milieu—he couldn't stand the opera. The whole thing was just crazy. We used to go to movies. And we used to get there at sunset, and the movie would begin before it was really dark.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So that we had the movie, and then we had the landscape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Often the movie was a western, so it was like a double western. And this made an impression on me, which you can see in that painting in [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That comes out. One of the influences is drive-in movies where you can see the landscape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And the screen and the light.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. Yes. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: It was beautiful. So that was a visual influence at that time, which I didn't implement until almost eight years later, or seven years later. So there I was making stained paintings and I came back to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. I want to ask you.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Just to shift and hit some other topics here.

VICTORIA BARR: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Once you started teaching at Barnard, every summer you would go away, or almost every summer.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then you started going out to the Hamptons at some point.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. After the summer in Santa Fe I decided I'd better stay closer to home.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe a less exotic world?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I really—I mean, I felt like I needed some peace. Of course, going to the Hamptons was not the solution, but I didn't know it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right. One other thing that intrigues me, and I always ask people who have had similar experiences.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did your family think of all of this?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, my family never knew what was going on in Santa Fe. I told them a little bit about the communes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I never really told my family very much about my life. I lived independently of them more or less since I was 14. Not financially independently, unfortunately, but otherwise. And I found that it was easier simply not to let them know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they never evinced any interest or questions or wondered about things? They pretty much left you to your own plots and schemes?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I would say that it was a little bit of everything. I think that they were not interested. I think that they understood that I did not want to tell them. I think that I realized that my mother was often hysterical and that I did not want to deal with her hysteria, that they were terribly busy all the time. They were not terribly interested. Also, they were not really very much in contact with this as a phenomenon of compelling interest the way I was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I don't think they knew who Ken Kesey was. I'm not—I did not want to—I—I—I would never—I wrote to—I always communicated with them, and I was writing to my mother about the women's movement and how I felt that, you know, she could learn a great deal from the women's movement, that she

was already quite liberated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I never told her, like about the accident because I only knew that they would worry.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But in terms of—you know, interesting things. There are people who do break away. From the little I've known of your parents over the years, they both seem to be very independent people, you know, who kind of let other people be independent.

VICTORIA BARR: Like "other"?

PAUL CUMMINGS: They allow other people to be independent. You know, if you're independent, that's fine. And some people's families are not. You know, somebody makes it an activity of making the family cohesive, which didn't seem to happen with you.

Anyway, to go back to some of these other points, I do want to ask you about the museum, which is a different—the Museum of Modern Art, which you started going to as a child.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that change over the years? I mean, you obviously as a child had one attitude towards it, and as you grew up it changed. Did it change? Do you feel any—what can I say? You know, what does one feel about someplace one has gone a lot? I mean, is it meaningful to you as a person, as an artist, as somebody that you had familial with association with it?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Sure. I mean, I went there as a child and I felt as if I belonged. And I used to go visit my father. I was close with some of the other people who worked there, like Jim Selby, like Dorothy Miller, who I haven't mentioned yet, who was the equivalent of my aunt, really, the way Philip was the equivalent of my uncle, like Jim Sobey was the equivalent of my uncle. I used to go pick my father up at work and hang out in his office and I knew a lot of people who worked with him. Used to look out the office window into the garden, and it was lovely. We used to go through the collections. He'd take me and show me the recent things. We'd go and check out, you know, the Boccioni's *City Rises [1910]* or the *A Night's Fishing in Antibes [1939]* or the [Klees and Mondrians] or the Monet *Water Lilies [1914-1926]*.

When I went to art school, of course my situation became more complicated in that it became loaded. Suddenly, I was the daughter of the director of—not director—well, Director of Collections at the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I felt that people had very mixed feelings about me; I'm sure that they did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I'm sure, too.

VICTORIA BARR: Most of them were either too tactful or too calculating to mention them. It was not easy, and it never has been from that moment. Now—I mean, I've gone through many later stages at the museum. My father became ill, and in approximately 1969 or 1970 he began to lose his memory. I watched him gradually become sicker and sicker. The museum became more sad and more tragic for me. The associations became more tragic so that I've reached a point where, unless there is an exhibition of compelling interest to me—and there are, still —

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: —I don't go at all. So that's the situation with the museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, you never go up to look at the collection or anything like that?

VICTORIA BARR: No. I really can't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's too difficult.

VICTORIA BARR: It's too difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, look. I can. I have been once. If I felt, for instance, that I wanted to go and look at the Matisse *Red Studio [1911]* because I felt that I needed to as a painter, I would go.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But just up to look at that and then leave.

VICTORIA BARR: And leave. Get out. It's very upsetting for me. Although I will say that I have been to openings, although I don't like to go to them anymore. The last opening that I liked was the Caro exhibition. Now, that was when my father was already quite sick. And—but that was an opening, you see. That also had to do with the character of the opening. It was an opening in which there were many, many artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I knew a lot of people. It was springtime. It was very beautiful. A lot of the openings I don't know very many people. I don't know who they are. I don't have a good time, and I wouldn't go anyway. So that, coupled with the painting associations, makes it no reason for me to go at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So—I mean, and I remain—for instance, I'm quite friendly with Richard Oldenburg. I know Blanchette Rockefeller, and I always say hello to her, and I'm friends with her daughter. And Liz Shaw, Director for the City. I mean, the fact is, though, that I have very little contact with the museum because it's just too painful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you—

[Off The Record.]

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. I want to go back to the painting because you started having exhibitions coming along here now.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Well, I'll tell you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, you'd had some in Aspen of that period.

VICTORIA BARR: 1967.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I had an exhibition of the filmstrip-type paintings, which was called *Aegean Landscapes* with Patricia Moore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: In 1969, I had the first exhibition of stained paintings that I made at Barnard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And in MacIntosh Hall, which was just built. It was quite a handsome show, and some people did come and see it. Helen Frankenthaler, for instance, came to see it. Then in 1970, I had the first exhibition in a New York gallery, with John Myers. I showed in the opening exhibition—I was the first one to open the gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was stained paintings. Then I showed, the following year—that's 1971—exactly a year, I had two shows with Johnny again. I was quite pleased with both of those exhibitions. I felt that the gallery was a good size and the work looked good. I think the first show, as a whole, was better than the second show. I think the second show had two very good paintings that were better than any of the paintings of the first show. I was very pleased that I had achieved my goal, which was to show in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I did not know whether I was due this or not, meaning that I had—although I am—on the one level I had a very strong sense of destiny about myself as a painter, on the other hand I also was not terribly confident. And I just didn't know whether it would happen or not, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think one does.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Confidence withstanding. You just keep doing what you do, and something happens now or it happens then.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can't make out a checklist of dates when things will happen and check them off as they do. It doesn't work that way.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah. It was a very happy period for me. I also showed some of the stained paintings at Larry Aldrich in 1970.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, in the summer.

VICTORIA BARR: In that, you know, sort of—oh, in the *Lyrical Abstraction* show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, that was a period when there was a huge interest in people who were involved under—that being one of the various titles that was going around.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that meaningful for you to be in that show up in Connecticut, which then came to the Whitney, didn't it?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I liked being included in it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you feel identified with those people in any way?

VICTORIA BARR: No. Not terribly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was kind of a catch-all title?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it was nice to be in a show that went to a museum?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Sure. Sure. And I knew Larry from Aspen, and I liked being in—I think it's okay to show up there. It's a good place to show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I felt that lyrical abstraction was invented too early.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean as a term or as a—

VICTORIA BARR: As a term.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: You know, that it might have done something to squelch something that might have turned out to be very interesting. It was like—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: —sweeping around and like dumping everybody into a category before they were ready or before they—before they look around and say, "Yeah." But then, of course, the Abstract Expressionists—who wants to categorize de Kooning with Rothko? I mean, how stupid can you get? Anyway, I felt very cynical.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, who are you pro in that case?

VICTORIA BARR: I'm pro both of them, but I don't think they are abstract—I mean, neither of them are Abstract Expressionists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is the Abstract Expressionist?

VICTORIA BARR: Pollock.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: Right? de Kooning is not abstract and Rothko is not expressionist.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But maybe as a combination.

VICTORIA BARR: Kline—Kline, of course, is an Abstract Expressionist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I'm pulling hairs, but it's true. How do you think Rothko felt being categorized with de Kooning, or vice-versa?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or Motherwell?

VICTORIA BARR: Or Motherwell, right. So lyrical abstraction was a commercial number.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It bombed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, did you sell paintings during this period?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I did. I sold a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I did. I sold enough—I was working, of course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So I sold enough to live off of, plus my salary from Barnard, and I was extremely proud of myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's good.

VICTORIA BARR: It was a great relief. I did not sell out either show, although I sold during and after. I was told that I would have sold out if I had shown the year before, because by 1970 the first crash, the first market crash had occurred.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Economics, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So, I wasn't bitter about it. You know, the '60s had been such a glorious time financially that—and the first shock was not that bad. I mean, it's gotten—you know, gotten grindingly worse and all mixed up with Watergate and, you know, all the post-Vietnam demoralization and despair and depression and everything. But that hadn't really happened yet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think we really didn't know what had hit us. So anyway, it was a fine time. I felt successful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's good.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how long did you paint in that style or that mode?

VICTORIA BARR: All right. Then, after my second show that was 1971, my friends Michael and Sarah Jane had gone to India in the fall. We'll leave that for a later tape, vis-a-vis painting.

The first stained paintings that were shown were very decorative. They were very beautiful, very beautiful colors, very [Inaudible.] like. The second paintings were—the second group of paintings were, I would say more tortured. There was much more form in them. And a couple of them I think were really good. So anyway, in December of 1971, four days after Bangladesh armistice was called, I took a plane and went to India to meet Michael and Sarah Jane.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was?

VICTORIA BARR: That was 1971, the end of 1971; it was December. And I went immediately to go to meet them. I'm not going to talk about the trip now. But anyway, there were many things that influenced me when I was in India. When I came back, my first wish was to use the color that I had seen in Indian saris, to incorporate it, to be influenced by it, in my next stained paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

VICTORIA BARR: The other thing I wanted to do was to paint into the stained painting these demons, faces, hands, very primitive style so that they would be emerging from the stained painting. And so my work—I intentionally wished by the time I came back from India, not when I went there—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you there?

VICTORIA BARR: Two months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, [Inaudible.].

VICTORIA BARR: I had wanted when I came back—I had seen—like there was a woman in an airport who had her hands painted, but lines in her hands were painted with. Evidently, she had just been married and these were the astrological, auspicious drawings. There were houses in India where hands were in whitewash placed on either side of the door, handprints. I had looked at a lot of Tantric art in Delhi, Hindu Tantric, not Buddhist Tantric, but Hindu Tantric.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ravi Kumar.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, the Kumar. The Kumar brothers—seven Kumar brothers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And one disgraced sister.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: I think that is terrific.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I never knew there was a sister.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'd always heard about the brothers.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I'll tell you about the sister in a minute.

The Indian thing, though, was really—like it's a whole, you know, I think for another time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that was the whole beginning of that.

VICTORIA BARR: Of the demons experience, yes. And there's much more to that. But that's the transition between the straight stained paintings and the paintings that, ultimately, you see on the wall.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think you consciously wanted those images? Was that while you were in India or afterwards, or did they start appearing and you noticed what they were?

VICTORIA BARR: No. It was conscious. They did not start appearing. I felt there was some—I mean, India changed me. There's no getting around it. I wanted to change, although heaven knows—of course, it was a period of extreme change anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you mean you wanted to change?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I—I—I'll tell you what I wanted to do. I didn't want to change. What I wanted to do was, I felt that India was very far away and that I felt that I wanted to—it was like going to the moon for me. It was the furthestmost point that I could think of going to. I had no Asian orientation whatsoever. It was so exotic, so exciting. And I went on a lark, really. The communication between me and Sarah Jane and Michael, in terms of whether I was going to go or not, was disrupted by the war. It was crazy. I mean, I really didn't know until four days before I left whether I was going to go or not.

I just went. I needed a vacation. I needed to get out because I had been working so hard, you know, and I needed a change. I'd give myself this because I had these two successful shows. You know what I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But somewhere in the back of my mind, I wanted to—I mean, remember that revolution was in the air. I mean, we had had the moon walks. You know, we had the peace movement, Civil Rights. I had just gone into a Women's Liberation group that fall. But because I went to India—that was the fall of 1971. Because I went to India, I missed, you know, in the center of that winter because I was away for two months. But anyway, there was a lot of action going on. I think that I felt in some way that I wanted to implement some kind of change.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not knowing what kind, but just a quest for something to change?

VICTORIA BARR: Right. Yeah. Even though in comparison, I certainly was a [Inaudible.] compared to the years that were to follow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, God, yes. I mean, I had everything going for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I'd managed to get to—as a child of the '50s to get beyond age 30 not being married, and survive. I'd reached my goal, which was to have a show in New York City in a regular gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was in the women's movement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what do you mean? You keep saying it. What do you mean you were "in"? You were part of a group?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. I was in a consciousness-raising group which met [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you go to the lectures? Were you involved in marches and picketing and all the other—

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah?

VICTORIA BARR: Exactly. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: And that I can also tell you that in more detail, particularly now. I think it influenced me as an artist.

So, those were like India, and the women's movement were the things that were foremost in my life. And I can either tell you about India now or we can wait.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'd like to really talk some more about how the art went along, because that gets lost in it.

VICTORIA BARR: In these adventures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In all the other adventures.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I was an adventurer then. Somebody told me years later, like five years later, they said, "My God. You were an adventurer." I didn't even know it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you see, one never does. That's what's exciting.

VICTORIA BARR: I had no idea.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But now, obviously, did you draw when you were in India or do any work?

VICTORIA BARR: No. No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was just a living experience, visual delights?

VICTORIA BARR: It was a living experience. I didn't draw because I already knew from my other trips—like I already knew from my experience in France that when you travel it is sometimes very difficult to work because you are in a state of change all the time. You don't have stability.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you take photographs?

VICTORIA BARR: I took a lot of photographs. I did bring something along, but I never used it. Michael couldn't draw—I mean, couldn't work very easily and was very tortured. I thought—well, I mean, after all, I had been working very, very hard for two years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I felt—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You needed a breather.

VICTORIA BARR: I needed a breather.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I had traveled enough so that I wasn't worried about not working. I didn't get the guilts anymore. Nor did I feel particularly inspired. Because by then, you see, Michael was still painting and drawing the world as we saw it. But I wasn't. So it wasn't as if, you know, I would get to Mahaweli Forum, say, and want to make a drawing of the temple. You know, that was not in my life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So I knew what was going to happen was going to happen. Also, the whole experience there was really—India is a really overwhelming place. And we were not on a sort of laid-back drug oriented hippie pilgrimage, so that our experiences were not blunted by drugs, nor were they cushioned by drugs, you know, made into a more euphoric—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I don't know. You know, I mean, the people we saw in India who were on drugs were the most wretched people, Western people that I have ever seen in terms of bad health, of being lost, being really strung-out, really thin, dysentery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Getting into my adventures. We are not sticking to the art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When you came back, what did you start doing? I mean, did you just pick up and continue working? Or did you think for awhile and want to make changes? What happened when you came back and started working again?

VICTORIA BARR: I wanted to start working immediately. The first experience that I had when I came back, I came back early March and, my God, did New York look great. Jesus! I mean, we had seen—theoretically, we had seen some of the worst things that you can see in the world. We had been in Calcutta. I came back to New York, and I was so depressed by the way New York looked, the way people dressed. Everything was gray, gray, gray, dreary winter coats. Everything was winter coats.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: There weren't any palm trees anymore, no light and no signs. I was beside myself. Also, I didn't know anybody who had ever been to India that I could discuss my trip with. And Michael and Sarah Jane were still there.

But Whitney annual—the last Whitney annual was on. I think it was the last painting Whitney annual at least. And I had a painting there from Johnny's, the last show I'd had at Johnny's called *Incantation*, which was one of the two very successful paintings of that exhibition. I went running up to the Whitney to see how it measured up. I was so frightened that the color would be off. And I felt that it was okay. The color held up, so I felt all right about that.

I had some round stretchers made for myself, and I started to stain them as I would have stained the bigger paintings. Then I began to put my handprints on them. And then I began to start thinking about making faces, but abstract, not that—like masks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Mask-like faces, except they were not masks, but painted like masks in that there was no outside contour, that there were abstract patterns on, like war paint.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. What do you mean they were not masks?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, in the sense that they were not—that they were the expression of feeling that was related to the structure of the face, in that you could see that there were eyes, nose, and mouth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: But that they were—the lines that I made to indicate everything else were patterns.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: In other words, there were not lines to indicate a cheekbone or, you know, the line that runs from the nose to the mouth or anything like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: They were absolutely painted patterns on them so you had—you knew what it was from the eyes, nose, and mouth. But I mean, I had no indication of outside contour.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The hair did not look like hair. It looked like landscaping. I was conflicted at that time because when I came back from India, I felt that my mentality, my psyche had changed for 10 days. So that I felt as if I had never—in a way that I had never felt before, in which it was extremely easy for me to live, that it was extremely easy for me to paint, that everything was very natural. That it wasn't exactly euphoria. But I didn't feel driven. This is an experience that I've never had. I've been very relaxed, but I've always felt a little bit driven. God knows in New York [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Helps one feel driven.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, it really does. It really supports you at your worst.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, anyhow, then it went away. I was very upset that it went away. It made an indelible impression on me, because I saw how easy life was. For the first time in my life, I saw how easy it was. I mean, in my conscious life. I mean, when you're a kid you don't think about things like that. But anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean easy in your conscious life?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it was so easy to function. You know, that waking up in the morning was beautiful, that the world was okay. You know, I'd just come back from seeing all these beautiful, exquisite, but very grim things, very extreme things. Came back to New York—the reason I felt at home in Calcutta was that I lived on Delancey Street and 14th Street. It was just really, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: More of the same.

VICTORIA BARR: More of the same in a way, except that New York was more depressing for me. Less overwhelming, but more depressing. And I can't tell you. I just knew that there was another way of living that I've never really been able to achieve since, but that made this indelible impression on me, which is I think why I ultimately became a Buddhist, in hopes that I would somehow or other attain this state, which I don't think is a very high state, by the way. I think it's just a way of—what it is, I think, in psychological terms is just a way of letting go of things rather than getting so frantic or so clinging of that stuff all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I made some watercolors at that time. The difference is subtle, but very, very evident to me. It was just easy. It was like very, very beautiful, but very easy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean they just happened?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. But anyway, I got back into my regular state of mind, which was fairly neurotic and reasonably productive, and I began to think about the round stained paintings with the demons and spirits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you pick round?

VICTORIA BARR: Because I had made a lot of round watercolors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. A lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know that.

VICTORIA BARR: Which I can find. I can show you.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What started the round shape, though?

VICTORIA BARR: Those I first made in Aspen. I made some—see, we have a disco upstairs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know. You're back in '66 or something.

VICTORIA BARR: Your secretary is going to have a crazy time. A little background music, though.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: In about 1967—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they were still kind of landscape images?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, they were. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a reason for that?

VICTORIA BARR: No, it was 1960—no, no, no, no. It was long, long before that. I made the first round—they weren't watercolors. They were pastels—in Aspen. On Aspen Mountain in the snow. It was a good way to paint, so-called paint the mountain because, of course, the curves, you know. The mountain was mottled with strips of dark pine trees and strips of snow, which were the trails, the ski trails.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that somehow or other, the round, having it round made it easier to incorporate the feeling of that kind of—flow? I don't know what to call it. But anyway, that was the beginning. Then I did a series of round watercolors on Martha's Vineyard just before I went to Europe, of the views from the house of a friend mine whose name is Helen Baldwin Mannoni, Windy Gates. It's a beautiful, small estate in Chilmark. Helen was a friend of mine that I went to Radcliffe with for that one year.

Then my first two summers on Long Island I became re-involved with round watercolors. This time they were completely abstract. And they looked like distant—they looked photographs that you sometimes get when you go to the planetarium, of planets, distant planets. But sometimes they were also very decorative at the same time. They weren't necessarily just the more vague, stained shapes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Sometimes they had little dots in them, or they had more discrete bands of color that didn't flow into one another. So the round paintings came out of the round watercolors, which I had been making all along, all along, and I made lots of them. I showed them in the shows that I had with Johnny. Some of them were very good. Some of them were much better than the big paintings, much more imaginative and complicated and very—they were very sort of cosmic lyrical. They were cosmic. I liked them, and I can probably show you some sometime.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you want to stop?

VICTORIA BARR: Um-hm. [Affirmation]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It sounds like you're fading a little.

VICTORIA BARR: I am. I am.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't want to compete with all these—

[END OF RELL 5 SIDE B.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side 11, the 18th of February 1977, Paul Cummings talking to Victoria Barr in her studio on 14th Street.

Okay. We will start with the influences.

VICTORIA BARR: Okay, the influences. I just wanted to speak very briefly and not in a completely ordered way about influences on me, as much as I can, of my trips and works of art that I have seen. I simply want to say this right now, because once I went to India, although I had looked at a lot of Japanese prints previously and loved them and still do, that India was a sort of major turning point in my life, where afterwards, gradually up until the present, I began to really look at Eastern works of art and think about Eastern music and Eastern dancing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which you hadn't much up until India.

VICTORIA BARR: Not really. Not tremendously. I mean, I did go to the Musée Guimet in Paris. And I did listen to the first Indian music that I had ever heard in my life when I was in Paris. I was in some [Inaudible.], Ravi Shankar. I was very taken by them then. And the first person I knew who really got caught up in Indian culture, or Indian and Tibetan culture, was Philip Glass, who was in Paris. But it wasn't as if—I mean, it wasn't—it was subtle.

I would say that Greece was the sort of first stepping stone for me towards the East, although when I went there, it seemed also to be, you know, the sort of roots of Western culture. The only thing is that what I liked about Greece was Crete and the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures more than the classical—what we consider classical Greek.

But I don't want to, you know, do a lot of picking around. The fact is that I was exposed to a tremendous amount wherever I went.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Well, that's been apparent, I think.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. It sure has.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were these influences that you observe now, later, and after the fact? Or were they things that you saw and said, "Wow," and then it rather quickly became apparent in your work?

VICTORIA BARR: I would say the first. That's why it's so difficult to talk about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Because it caught—although sometimes I was really struck, I was really taken by something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I didn't work for the next two months and see that influence become apparent right then and there. It was much more subtle than that.

The one thing I wanted to say about my time in Paris—which now I see simply as looking at the Western world more in terms of the Louvre and so on and so forth—was that I spent a lot of time going to movies.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You mentioned that.

VICTORIA BARR: I won't go into all the movies I saw. I mean, I will only say that I thought—I liked Antonioni a lot, visually. And—but the one movie that really struck me, and I would say this now as a painter directly, was the very unusual experience that I had. They were showing *Louisiana Story*, Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* [1948], at the *cinematheque*. And they had all the outtakes, and they showed them for two days, all the outtakes from *Louisiana Story*. I went one day for six hours. I was really fascinated by shots on the bayous, where they would have a shot and then they would have another shot.

Like I remember that there was a stick in the water that was by the shore. And they must have been on a boat or a canoe or something like that. They would come up to that stick, and you'd see it in the water, and the water would be flowing by. Then they would sort of pan in towards the shore. Then they would come at it from another angle and everything. And this really—this really made an impression on me. I think that in a sense what it was

was that at that time I was doing these filmstrip-like paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Where I would take—you know, as if I were doing the same thing, but a view of say, the Greek Islands. And that what I was concerned about was changes of time of day sometimes, and sometimes—and that of course meant changes of coloring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Sometimes also an island in the water. Then picture yourself on the beach, a view of the shore coming down, you know, maybe a slightly hilly shore, coming down to the water. Then you look down the other end of the beach, and you see a different landscape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Anyway, I think that it's not as if that the outtakes from *Louisiana Story* set me off. What they did was that they reaffirmed my interest at that time in this kind of multiple—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. The sequential imagery.

VICTORIA BARR: So, that was a very direct influence. Then, as I said before, in India, we did go to sari stores. We would ask to see a certain sari. The sari stores are really beautiful. They are small, and they were like going into somebody's linen or something, where there were stacks of saris. And you'd say, "Well, I'd like to see that one." They would open it up, and they would show you the border. And then they would unfold it once so you could see what it looked like regularly, without the border.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then they would take it, the same thing they would take out pink. Then they would take it out in ochre, and then they would take it out in lemon yellow. Again, I mean, this was more exciting for me than going to a museum. I mean, it was just delectable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The colors.

VICTORIA BARR: Delectable! The color was just—oh! And that's where I first saw tie-dyes, and I saw—well, ikat, except that when it's in sari I don't think it's called ikat, but you know, where the thread is pulled and makes patterns, rather than where it's, you know, bunched and then dyed like tie-dye.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: We saw tie-dye made in Rajasthan, you know, a sort of field outside a village filled with tie-dyed pieces of material, 10-15 yards all drying in the sun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: So there I was, as I said, thinking that I would use this when I came home, and found only this year that the saris that I brought home with me I finally used or was inspired by one of the patterns in the sari, which I have in the [Inaudible.] painting in the next room, where I have put what we could call a grid, an ultramarine-blue grid on top of the painting, except what that really is, it's the copy of the sari. Not an exact copy. But anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Follows the general—

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. But that's in 1970—I did that—I finished that painting in 1976. And I, you know, got the saris in 1971. But anyway, so that was then. But materials made an influence on me. I've talked about other Indian influences that had that. And I've talked about seeing the Indian painter in *The River* [1951] movie, the Jean Renoir movie, making paintings on the ground with powdered paint. I knew about the festival in India, where people throw color at one another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Powdered color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It's my idea of heaven.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you ever see one of those?

VICTORIA BARR: No. It comes in the spring, I think. And we had already left by the time it came around. But I just wanted to mention the *Louisiana Story* because I think it's important. There really isn't anything else except that I had reasons for going to India that were not readily apparent in my conscious mind when I went. I think that I went to shake myself up, without really knowing it, because I had been such a traveler before that I hadn't understood fully the extent that it is possible for somebody to travel and to implement changes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And frankly, although I think I wanted to change, I didn't—I wasn't looking for anything in particular [Inaudible.]. I was just looking at things. I could tell you—you know, I mean, I could tell you—the one thing I will say is—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was stimulating you to want to change? I mean, there's this constant underlying flowing sort of flowing through all of this, the quest and the change.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. I know. Well, I think that I am—I think that the quest is an attitude. The quest is an attitude.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think that it can be both used intelligently and can also be used compulsively, you know, where you're simply questing forever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which puts aside the problem.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, in a sense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You set up a ritual of going from here to there to here to there.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, there are lots of people who do that.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I do know one thing about the Indian trip. And I don't want to repeat myself, because I know I said this last time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that was that I needed a vacation. I had been out there on Long Island in the summertime painting a lot. I hadn't been out of the country since 1967. And I don't know about—I mean, I can't answer your question directly. But I do know that I did several things when I came back. Things changed at home, and I changed correspondingly when I came back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: None of this, of course, was known to me then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And that's the end of what I wanted to say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, did the effects of India begin while you were there? Or were you just so involved with it that you didn't think about it? Did it become more apparent and more specific after you came back and had time to think and got into working? I mean, it wasn't just somebody opened a door and said, "This is India. Boom." It took some reaction time.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, yeah. A lot. I'm still doing it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I'll say one thing. And that was that when I was in India, a lot of the time I felt overwhelmed by it. I think that this is a very—I would say that this is a fairly common reaction.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what, the populace, or the landscape, or the buildings, or the culture?

VICTORIA BARR: The populace—in terms—the people. The people and the culture. Overwhelmed and really fascinated, and often rather frightened. I think probably needlessly so, but you know, can't do too much about that. I liked the Indian people, and—although, you know—I mean, we had traveling experiences that I'm not going to go into now because that's like, you know, two tapes all told.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I learnt certain things when I was there about—one of the things that was so astounding about India is never knowing what to expect. We never knew from one minute to the next what to expect. We went basically without letters of introduction. We had one letter of introduction in Sri Lanka in Ceylon from Arthur C. Clarke.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Of all people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who else?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it's wonderful we went to see him. He showed us a photograph of Mount Adam, which is one of the major mountains in Sri Lanka, which is supposed to have on it the footprint of Buddha, who went down there during—and of course, a lot of Sri Lankans are Buddhists. We went to several Buddhist cities, which were extraordinarily beautiful, particularly a place called Palinuras [ph], which is the single most beautiful place I've ever been in my life. It's a rainforest with a series of stupas and Buddhas in an extraordinary jungle or rainforest birds, still partly used by Buddhists, who must live in a monastery nearby, I would assume, because Palinuras is a ruin. It's not active in the sense that some of the other temples were, Hindu temples [Inaudible].

We saw very active temples in southern India. Like in Majuli, we saw a temple which I've talked about. It was all newly painted as opposed to Tanjore nearby, which was basically not new so much anymore and much more like going to a—oh, I don't know. Anyway, I don't want to get in this because it's just going to go on and on if I do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I found there that the main—the main interest I had when I was in India was in the people, in how they lived their lives, how they looked, how different they looked from one another, the extraordinary range of poverty and wealth, which you could see if you simply turned around on a street corner.

The population, per se, never seemed to me to be overwhelming, even in Calcutta. I never felt that there were so many crowds that, you know, we just had to run inside and stay out of it. I never had that sense. But we didn't travel on the public buses, for instance, where people would hang outside the windows in order to get to where they were going.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But India never leaves you alone the first time you go there. You have to look at everything. We would go to bed very early, also because there was no night life. We would go to bed early. I remember my frustration in Delhi, of trying to go to bed at nine, and dead, just dead, and hearing music outside my window. We had come into Delhi—this was just at the end of our trip, which was the end of February, beginning of March. And it was an auspicious time for weddings in Delhi.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's right, because of the change in the cycle or something.

VICTORIA BARR: Something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, there's a holiday that everybody has to get married on, all around, yes. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I think so. Outside my window there was this wedding procession going by. And the groom was on a white horse. There were dancers and drummers and it looked like something out of the 18th century. I mean, always we were confronted by things that seemed to have nothing to do with the 20th century and were completely alive and functioning. So that it was like stepping not only—I mean, we toured the continent as if we were making a tour of, you know, England or France. Little did we realize.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were touring several centuries.

VICTORIA BARR: Twenty-four hour train trips and stuff like that.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: But, you know, we were going into time warps all the time. This was very, very hard to manage in a sense. My friends Michael and Sarah Jane Helminski, who I traveled with most of the time, were—Sarah Jane and I kept journals, which was one way that we managed to keep ourselves somewhat stabilized.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. We just wrote all the time. We'd sit down and have periods where we would write.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you meet people?

VICTORIA BARR: That was easy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, just in the course of getting around?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you look to meet certain kinds of people in certain places?

VICTORIA BARR: No, we didn't, really. We just met them wherever we were. We met a couple from California that we liked enormously. And we kept bumping into them again and again. We met another man—we met them in Goa, the first place where we were all together. We met another man whose nickname was Larry, Larry G, which is like a nice nickname for an Indian. He was in the Peace Corps and eventually went to meet him in the Village. We had the privilege of staying in an Indian village so that we could see how most people lived. And I felt that this was a great, great privilege to do that, because since India is really a village country, and an agricultural country, except that this was in Rajasthan, so it was semi-desert where we were.

This was a very beautiful and poetic experience to see them rounding up the cows in the evening. You could see the sun go down over sort of quasi-desert. It wasn't really sand. All this dust would come up from the cattle walking out. The children would be out playing, and there would be little fires and everything. And we really got a sense of village life from staying there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So, we saw people living differently and all sorts of different people. I mean—we never—what we didn't do was—we might have if I—I mean, if I had been more organized and if I had known more than four days in advance that I was really going to go on this trip—the reason I say that was that the Bangladesh war was going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I would have tried to get some letters of introduction so that we could have met some people who were more involved with culture and everything. And we didn't do that. In Delhi we knew some people, a Burmese man and his wife, who were friends of the Indian painter who lives here, [Inaudible.]. At that time, he was working at Tibet House in Delhi. And that was my first sort of introduction to sort of Tibetan things. But anyway.

As I said before, we went all the way around India, and we went all the way to the edge of Rajasthan to Jaisalmer, which was sort of out like in *Beau Geste*. It was like the outpost for the camel corps, a fantastic ruined sandstone city that literally turned gold during sunset. But I'm going to curtail that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, so India has obviously made an impression on you.

VICTORIA BARR: India made a great, great indigestible impression on me. And I think that I'll be working out of that for years to come. I would like to go back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You haven't been back since that trip.

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That trip. But you've been elsewhere.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, I certainly have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's exciting.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I have indeed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, when you came back you were teaching, right?

VICTORIA BARR: I was teaching, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you came back and taught?

VICTORIA BARR: I taught immediately. I got off the plane—I'd been on the plane for 24 hours. And I started teaching the next day after I got back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All looked very different?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, it sure did. It looked gray. It looked really gray.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, what did you do through the spring and the summer? You painted? Did you not? Or what? What happened?

VICTORIA BARR: What I did when I got back was, I was carrying on my normal, everyday life here in New York, painting, teaching. My women's group was going strong. I joined it before I went to India and rejoined it when I came back. It was going full force. I mean, the women's movement was really going strong then. Anyhow, that took up a lot of my time, energy, and interest.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what was that when you keep referring to the women's group?

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. The women's group never had a name. I feel very sad about that. But anyway, I would like to list who was in it. And I can't remember the names of everybody because some people dropped out. But Marcia Tucker and Elke Solomon and Joan Snyder, who eventually dropped out, and Nancy Azara, Jane Kaufman, Pat Steir, Peg Brennan—let's see. Nancy English, and there's somebody else whose name I will remember in a minute. I said Jane Kaufman, didn't I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was not a group that was supposed to be an artists group. But there were many people in that group were artists so that it did sort of—Harriet Lyons. That was the other person, who went to work immediately on *Ms.* magazine, which had—the first issue of *Ms.* I read on the plane going to India. That's really, really something, isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Contrast, huh?

VICTORIA BARR: Imagine going to India and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Explaining *Ms.* magazine.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Except, of course, in the upper classes there are some very liberated women in India. But anyhow.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, how did it form?

VICTORIA BARR: It formed out of Redstockings. I was not there when it formed. Oh, Joan Thorne. That was another painter in the group. I wasn't there at its inception. It had been going for a year already by the time I joined.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you got into it through whom?

VICTORIA BARR: Marcia Tucker.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: She was the one person I knew in the group. I didn't know anybody else prior. I had formed a women's group of my own the year before and had gone all through that year, along with somebody called—well, her name now is Ann Grossman. Anyway, we don't need to go into that. But anyhow, our group disbanded, and I was looking for another group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The first group?

VICTORIA BARR: The first group disbanded and I was looking for another group and got into this group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, what was its purpose?

VICTORIA BARR: Its purpose primarily was to do consciousness-raising, which we did in a pretty structured way for easily till 19—let's see. If that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: '72, roughly.

VICTORIA BARR: Let's just give it approximately three years. The first two years were the best for the following reasons: There are only so many subjects that you can consciousness-raise on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: So that, although we covered the subjects more than once often, finally we got bored. It's as simple as that. There just wasn't anything else to do. Also, the main good thing about this group was that most—almost all the people in the group were professional before they were in the group. It gave them a lot of support in whatever it was that they were doing. And this was particularly good for the artists in the group. I mean, it really gave people support and energy and, you know, when they were looking for galleries and whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was marvelous that way. Eventually, what happened—and the other thing that our group did was, we went to speak in various colleges and universities in and around New York to start other women's groups there. But the thing that I think we did best—this is outside of ourselves—was that we would ask people that we met along the way, and friends that we met along the way, to come during certain evenings so that instead of being, let's say, eight of us, there would be 25 of us. We'd divide up, and we'd do consciousness-raising on a certain subject. And then the people who were interested who were just new that evening would get to meet one another and decide whether they wanted to be in a group themselves.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How often would you meet?

VICTORIA BARR: Once a week for all this time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my goodness.

VICTORIA BARR: Except over, you know, certain holidays and stuff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Summers, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: And summers—summer things were a little—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: We liked each other a lot, became friends with one another. The people who we helped form their own groups, they—I—of course, there were many times when I would never see them again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then I'd run into them once and they would say, "Oh, I was in your loft once. I remember you."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I'd say, "Well, our group went very well, you know. And thanks, it was good to know you." It still happens to me now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what system did you use? Because there were several around in those days, as I—

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I tell you. We did not decide on the subject in advance. And we used to set time limits to how long each person would speak to that subject. We did not confront or criticize one another ever. Sometimes we would have a group discussion afterwards, and sometimes we wouldn't. Then at other times, when we got to know one another and we had a sense of continuity about one another's lives and stuff like that, then there would be news. You know, we'd find out what happened and, you know, what was going on and who was going where and all that kind of thing, too.

Sometimes we had parties. Then later, I—what should have happened, which couldn't happen, according to me—and I can only speak—I only speak for myself now—is that it would have been better if we could have taken some kind of ongoing political action outside of the group. But everybody in the group was so busy with their own professional lives that there was no time. And finally, some of the artists in the group got visiting artist jobs and they would be away for even a whole semester, even a winter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: That began to deplete the group. And the fact that we felt that it would be very difficult for somebody new to come into the group so late in the game, when we all knew one another so well and everything, the group finally sort of disbanded gradually.

Then another thing that happened was that, when we started, we felt that we were changing our lives. We felt that we were part of a movement that was changing society. It was very exciting. It was also, again, quite frightening. There was a lot of anger, and it was very, very complicated. But we felt that we were in the forefront. And then as the years went by, we could see, you know, that gradually it was disseminating, more or less, into the culture. Although, God knows it's still got a long way to go.

But we found ourselves suddenly—or gradually, not suddenly, gradually saying, "Well, now what do we do?" You know, there may be consciousness-raising groups in other parts of the country that have the kind of force that we did at the beginning. But what are we supposed to do now? You know, where do we go from here, while we're—as we were in a bind in the sense that we couldn't—I mean, it was a psychiatric—Peg Brennan was a psychiatric social worker. You know, she was in another women's group of social workers and Flo Kennedy of all people. They were in contact with welfare mothers and, you know, people who could really have been benefited from the basics. We had already benefited from the basics. So we were stuck in a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But Flo is not a good example because she was so active as a professional activist.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, well, she was. And Peg was in a sense. Her profession overlapped a lot with the possibility of being a professional activist, though nowhere near on the level of Flo.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You know. But in other words, she was involved with social change in a way where—I mean, six of us were in our studios most of the time and not in contact with that many people, other than the people that we knew already. But I mean, we saw tremendous changes in the art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think of it in retrospect?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it's terrific.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I do. I do think—but I see the dark side of it, too. You know, I see people being—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is what?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, stuck in anger. You know, blaming—blaming men, which I feel was really not the whole story. Putting down women who simply wish to be wives and mothers. I think that was very bad, too, really horrendously bad.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because the women who wanted to do that really got scared?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And thought they were maltreated by their peers or friends or whatever, you know.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. And I feel—I feel that I might have lost some friends because—I know I did. I have a feeling that because they misinterpreted. I used to keep saying, although, I mean, I was no example of a wife and mother. I used to keep saying, "Women want to do that, that's great." Also because I have a tremendous amount of respect for the needs of children and also in a sense the needs of mothers. If you've just had a child and you're interested in the child and you're involved with the domestic life, then my God! If you have two children or three children, which is rather unusual these days, actually, but—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's coming back.

VICTORIA BARR: It's coming back. I know, according to *New York* magazine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, is it? You mean they finally approved it?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. But I mean, frankly, I could have done with a little bit more care when I was a child. I know that side of the coin very well. What I was interested in was helping women who wanted to do things other than that or wanted to make some kind of combination of the two.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, with every political movement there are bound to be terrible, terrible failings in it. And all I can say is that I always spoke—I always spoke out for the other possibility, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, again, another whole tape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. But I just wanted to touch upon it.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, when did you start going out to the Hamptons for your summers? Because that continued, didn't it, for several adventures in the summers?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Well, more or less.

[Off The Record.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, happy Hamptons. No?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, you have a chart.

VICTORIA BARR: I have a chart here. It says that the first summers I went to Long Island were the summer of 1970 and the summer of 1971. Those were the two summers previous to the exhibitions that I had at Maya's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then, the summer of 1972, that was the summer after I came back from India, because I was in India in December of '71, and in January and February of '72. Then the summer of '73 and the summer of '74, I was in Long Island.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm.

VICTORIA BARR: And I always stayed in the same place in the studio of—that belonged to Bob Keane [ph].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, the bookseller.

VICTORIA BARR: The bookseller. He had converted the studio—converted a barn into a studio in Bridgehampton [ph], which was very, very beautiful and had a glass wall that looked out over a potato field.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Although it wasn't very far from the Montauk Highway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was quiet.

VICTORIA BARR: It was quiet and he was a very nice landlord. We reminisced about old times. The studio had been made for Grace Hartigan first and it had many artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Way back then?

VICTORIA BARR: Way back then, made by him or her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been the '50s then.

VICTORIA BARR: Sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. He was remarried when I moved in and was married to the niece of Jim Sobey. Her name was Melissa. That was kind of fun. We liked each other and maintained a somewhat discreet distance, although they lived right next door in the summertime.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like the summers out there?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I had an experience about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because sometimes people get into such a social whirl not much gets done. Or they just work and avoid people except during weekends or something.

VICTORIA BARR: I worked very well when I was there. Every summer I worked very well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was good in that sense?

VICTORIA BARR: It was good in that sense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. And I made some friends. I got to be very close with Marc Reichert and Sally McLeod. I knew already some people before I went out there and met many more. Found out more about the sort of different art factions out there, the sort of Springs, East Hampton, and then the sort of Larry Rivers entourage.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: The more solitary people like Jack Gellerman [ph], meaning solitary in the sense that he went everywhere, but was solitary, which was sort of my position also, really. Somebody like Robert Dash, who lived there all year round.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I met Kenneth Koch. We saw John Ashbery, whom I'd met in Paris. And pretty much—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The whole tribe out there.

VICTORIA BARR: The whole tribe. I mean, Minoush and Nikki Ekti and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: His daughter just got married.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nemo.

VICTORIA BARR: Oh. I never knew her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh.

VICTORIA BARR: I knew about her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pretty girl.

VICTORIA BARR: Became—well, I mean, it—you know, again, it's a whole list of names and parties, parties, parties, parties, parties.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: At first it was amusing. For anybody it would be amusing if you liked to go out a lot. Then finally it became extremely empty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, it was the same—you know, it was the same, the same, the same, the same. I felt that, you know, this—and I don't think I'm wrong. I felt that some of the most interesting times occurred in September when many, many people went home.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And left certain groups of people around who then got together. And it was sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who waited all summer.

VICTORIA BARR: And it would be cold at night, you know. You'd have to wear a heavy sweater and a raincoat outside. You'd go inside.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Grace Borgenicht and Warren Brandt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Charles Rydell was around and was being obstreperous and generous, had many people staying with him. I used to go up there and swim in his pool. Got to be great friends with Buddy Worcheffer [ph] down in Hampton Bay, which was very refreshing. His house was by the bay and you could sit and look out at calm water, which I prefer to heavy sort of—and I got to be friends with Barbara Zucker and Susan Williams, who started the AIR Gallery during the women's movement, and Frank Williams.

I mean, every summer it was a new thing. That also was a little disturbing, becomes sometimes—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean "new"? The people shifted?

VICTORIA BARR: Shifts of people, which made it hard in that there I was—picture, you know, in my studio again, and sort of going out and having to start again with new groups of people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But there were still a fair number of people who were there year after year.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Year after year. I stayed away from the Spring scene.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

VICTORIA BARR: I just did. I didn't like it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they are older and they are different.

VICTORIA BARR: And they are also older.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Somehow, stuck more around Bridgehampton and Southampton. But Southampton really meant exclusively Larry and David Maisel. And then I showed one summer at the Tower Gallery with Gary Lujeski [ph], the dealer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Marc Reichert and I showed there and it was very active.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it was good for reasons other than just that they were productive summers in terms of work?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I know what it's like. I have some greater understanding of, you know, why Jane Freilicher paints the way she paints, why Bob Dash paints the way he paints, what they are painting.

Finally, no. No. I really don't think so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It wasn't worth it, ultimately?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I think what I did was I let it run its course for me. And who know? I might under other circumstances go out there again. I haven't written it off my list completely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I don't have very much to say about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: Finally. People I saw then I really don't see anymore. But again, if I were to go out there, I might have a different group of friends. My situation would be different, all sorts of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Again, it's like—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it would be a different time.

VICTORIA BARR: It's a different time. And you never can tell. You just never can tell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, when did you go to Bali?

VICTORIA BARR: I went to Bali the first time in 1975, the second time in 1976.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you come to do that?

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. I'll tell you about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, because that's been a whole new—

VICTORIA BARR: A whole new episode.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. I mean, it's one thing to go to India or something. But Bali is even, in a way, more exotic, isn't it?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, yes and no. I mean, once—I thought when I went to India that I was really doing something adventurous because I had had no wish to do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just happened, and there you went.

VICTORIA BARR: It just kind of happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. So you're implying Bali was a different kind of situation?

VICTORIA BARR: A little bit. One of—I have various reasons that I went to Bali. One of them was very, very intuitive as opposed to my trip to India, where I just went, like a lark.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Bali was different. But again, it's not as if I sat down and read a lot about it. It's just that I had it on my mind and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: From what source?

VICTORIA BARR: A very small sources.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From people? Or reading?

VICTORIA BARR: From people. I met some people in India who had been in Bali. We had seen a lot of dancing when we were in India, particularly in the Madras [ph]. We would—several—[Inaudible.] performances, but I thought they were astonishing. The people that we met in India had come—some people had come from Bali. They said, "Well, you know, if you like the dancing here, you should go to Bali." Then they began to explain how extraordinarily beautiful it was. I had always wanted to go somewhere where there were terraced rice fields. Just visually I wanted to see that. I was very attracted to it. So that was one thing.

They said it was very green, and it harkened back to my seeing photographs in Aspen of my friend Bob Chamberlain of Tahiti and thinking that it would be a bit like Tahiti, but with Eastern culture, rather than, you know, the sort of perhaps by now watered-down culture of the South Pacific Polynesian culture, which I'm much less interested in.

But little did I realize how right I was. So I went. I mean, I really—I really—I really was accurate. Also, I wanted to—I had remembered in Marshall McLuhan's book, *The Medium Is the Message* [Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore; New York, Bantam Books: 1967] that page in which there's a Balinese dancer. There's a caption that says, "Everything you do is art." This had made—you know, this had made a very great impression on me. I didn't know exactly how to interpret it, you know, or go from the literal to the non-literal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I had all these coruvious [ph] maps all over my room as a child.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I had looked—I'm sure that they are one of the reasons that I like to travel so much. I looked at—now, I remember the figure of a Balinese dancer. And I remember little drawings of the houses around the South Pacific, even though I don't think that there's a Balinese house because it's not interesting as a drawing. It's only interesting as a plan, not as a drawing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But anyway, yes, [Inaudible.]. I had been interested in anthropology, had read Margaret Mead's *Blackberry Winter: My Earlier Years* [New York, William Morrow & Co.: 1972], where she has a chapter on being in Bali. But I can't say that that was a major influence. I knew that I wanted to go back to the East. I realized that I would have to go back to India in our wintertime, and that seemed to be difficult, even though my Christmas vacation was very long.

Whereas, in Bali and around there, it is somewhat their winter, so that I wasn't going to be faced with 110-degree temperatures, which I didn't look forward to, going to India in our summertime, or monsoons. I was worried about getting sick while I was there. And so, that was convenient to suddenly find out that it was winter in Bali, which meant that it was really comfortable and beautiful. You can swim there in the wintertime; it's not cold. So anyway, I went.

I also went because I had had some very difficult years between the time that I had been in India and the time I went to Bali. That's like four years, three or four years in there. My father had become increasingly sick. It was terribly difficult. I had had some professional difficulties, had left Johnny Myers. That was very upsetting to me also. Again, I needed a vacation and I needed to get out and very badly this time. So I went and had an extraordinary time.

In retrospect, I would say that in a way, speaking of the search, again, in a much more specific way, I felt that there was something there for me. And there was. I mean, I found—whatever it was that I was looking for, I found it there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. Did you know before you left? Or were you just in that quest again? Did you know what you were looking for?

VICTORIA BARR: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were still looking?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, except that I had this very strong intuitive feeling that it would be—look. What can I say, that it would be exciting, that I would find something there that would have meaning for me. And it did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: It was—and yet, I can't say that I knew in advance what I would find, except that I have a background in India, which enabled me to understand how to travel in the East, how to wait, how not to travel too hard, which we had done in India. I knew how not to do that. Bali is easy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You forget about time, in other words.

VICTORIA BARR: It's very easy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: You don't have to travel for 24 hours on a train. The people are accessible. It's possible to live in the villages. They are hospitable. They are friendly. They aren't starving, so you don't—you know, you're not confronted with very painful things all the time the way you are in India. It is very, very different from India. It's also very different from all the other islands in the Indonesian archipelago. One of the main reasons it is is because it's—now the people there are, for the most part, Hindu animists. That means what was left previously of the sort of strange, you know, animal worship, that kind of stuff, and Tantric Buddhist.

The person that really writes very, very well about this, and I think explains it in the best possible way is Claire Holt in her book *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* [New York, Cornell University Press: 1967]. She speaks a great deal about the culture in general. This really was suited to me, because I was, on many levels—visually, the landscape was astonishing. The people wore beautiful clothing. There were beaches and palm trees and wonderful mountains and, you know, volcanoes and some very handsome temples.

There was dancing in the villages in the temple festivals, which were completely integrated into their everyday life. So for the first time, I was able to see dancing done as, you know, sort of village life, where they were performing, yes, but performing for one another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not a tourist-trade kind of organized situation.

VICTORIA BARR: No. That's right. Where you, you know, had to put your ear to the ground in the morning and try and find out what villages were having festivals and how to get there, and all sorts of stuff like that.

Now, I don't know all the ins and outs of this. But I do know that some of the dancers are farmers. Although they may get to be—at a certain period in their life, they may get to be so good that they become teachers instead. But one sensed—I mean, it was astonishing to go through dusty, sort of palm-lined villages and everything, and right around the outside there would be all this water in the rice fields, all these terraced rice fields and everything, and know that that night there was going to be a dance, which could be highly skilled and sophisticated, with, full gamelan and orchestra that was played by the people in the village, who somehow or another had collected enough money to be able to put this gamelan orchestra together.

When I think about this split between everyday life here in New York and the way we go and look at art and all of that, you know, here it all was, all interwoven together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you have so many more simultaneous cultures here.

VICTORIA BARR: I know. But still. Still. It just had a feeling there that I've never seen anywhere else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: The whole—you know, the whole business of—I don't think that the dancers or the gamelan players were really considered that special. You know, they were just part of the village.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They do something else, and then they did this, too.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. That's right. But they weren't put up on a pedestal so much. I'm making this very black and white. And after all, I don't speak Bahasa Indonesian. I've never been there long enough to really know. But this is my impression. I think it would be anybody else's impression who had been there as long as I have.

[END OF REEL 6 SIDE A.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anyway, what you have been talking about—this is side 12—leads me to ask you a couple of questions. One is, several times in the course of the interview you've mentioned dance.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Yes, I have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As being something that you've gone to see, and you've looked for it rather just really just let it happen. Has it interested you for a long, long time?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As entertainment or participation?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, mostly entertainment, although I have done a lot of dancing myself, you know, a lot of rock and roll and stuff like that. But I've never—you know, I've never been—I think that I would have liked to have been a professional dancer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: But I somehow was never very athletic, because I was not encouraged to be and didn't sort of seek it out on my own. The dancing that was available to me when I was young was ballet, which seemed to me to be too difficult, and a certain kind of modern dance, which I didn't like at all. I laughed at it, probably because I'd looked at so much ballet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true. Modern dance is all—

VICTORIA BARR: Inspirational.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is that it?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, God! I guess that's—what's her name? Katherine Dunham.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Katherine Dunham, yes.

VICTORIA BARR: That was the kind of modern dance that I did a little bit of when I was young. I didn't—you know, I was okay, but I didn't like it. But if I had been—you know, if had been more athletic or thought that I had been more athletic, I would have liked to have danced with Yvonne Rainer. She's the—she and—oh, gosh, there's somebody else that I really think is marvelous whose name I may remember or I may not. But Yvonne, Yvonne, I really, really like.

I think that it has influenced my painting a lot. And—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: Just movement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The rhythm and the moves?

VICTORIA BARR: The rhythms and the movement. If you look at my painting, it's not—I mean, it does have a certain kind of movement in it. But it's not—I mean, again, you know, I can't do that one-to-one thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right. It doesn't have to.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. I know. I know. I keep looking for that, and it's absurd. It's not there. It just doesn't work that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's only for art historians.

VICTORIA BARR: Metamorphosis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't worry about it.

VICTORIA BARR: Metamorphosis.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. Constantly.

VICTORIA BARR: I do really—I'm really interested in the way people move. And now, more than going to dance performances, I'm interested in simply looking at the way people walk down the street, how groups of people move, or how a whole street moves.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: You see the lights change and the cars then all move ahead. Then you see the people moving along on the sidewalks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or they bunch up.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, and then move—

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then it starts all over. Yes, yes. Thinning out.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. Exactly. Exactly. You do have it right. Sit on the bus and just look out the window and see if you can [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Another thing that has come up in several different guises, sometimes directly and indirectly, is landscape as something you walked over or specifically looked at.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does that work back in ways, do you think? I mean, before you did paint landscapes at one time as specific.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But then it became imaginary.

VICTORIA BARR: Imaginary, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Well, the stain paintings certainly had a landscape feeling to them, a sort of cosmic imaginary landscape feeling. Present paintings, some of which are stained paintings with more on them have it, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: I think that what happened and maybe one of the reasons that I was so interested in the terracing was that last year when I came back from Bali, I was still—I had made—we should really—I should really talk to you more about my work now in a more consecutive way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

VICTORIA BARR: Which will lead into this landscape thing. This is sort of a culmination.

When I got back from India, I started to try and paint these demons into the stained paintings. And I was not entirely satisfied with my efforts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You mentioned that.

VICTORIA BARR: Then my professional relationship with Johnny Myers went on the rocks. And when I went to Provincetown, I was prepared to work for another summer. I found that for a variety of reasons, some of which I mentioned, and sort of general chaos of being in the women's movement, and some other things—fights with friends and stuff—it's a very angry period for me. I was so angry that I couldn't make the stain paintings because they take a certain kind of control, self-control, really. Because, you know, like you pour the paint on, and you move the canvas around, or whatever. But there was no way. I felt like—it's very strange. I remember saying that what I really wanted to do was tear my paintings up, I was so angry. I don't mean in the sense of being self-destructive. I mean I just needed to do something else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That activity of tearing apart.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. Or something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was also impeded in my work because the studio was very hot. And I liked to work in the afternoon, which was the hottest time of day. So it was not the greatest circumstances. So what I did was that one day I went into the supermarket, and I found a—I mean, I came across a box of Crayola crayons, the big kind that didn't exist when I was a kid, many more colors.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Aha!

VICTORIA BARR: Aha—exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And I got myself a pad of cheap paper, and I thought the only thing to do was to start drawing the people that I was angry at. I don't—I never made drawings that resembled the people. You know, I wasn't interested in capturing their likeness.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: And so this was simply a way—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are kind of symbols in a way.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, yes. I just sat down—listen, I was just angry straight for two months. And I would just sit down and draw. I was not—it was a way of letting off steam in a way. I wasn't thinking about making art, you know, nothing. I was just drawing like mad and then there were all these beautiful colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: It was something like 84 colors. After a week of doing this, I found out that I liked to do it. After a week, I looked at them and I sort of said to myself, "Hey, I've got something there." And I drew and I drew and I drew and I drew for the entire summer. I also did some more stained paintings, and I tried again with the round paintings to make this sort of mysterious manifestation of a face, sort of—really manifestation come through.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Through the lines?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, no, because I was painting in a very gingerly way, whereas in the drawings I was just, you know, letting it rip.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Well, that's what I meant, in the drawings.

VICTORIA BARR: In the drawings they were fine. In the paintings they looked like I was trying to draw a face, you see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: They looked very like illustration and sentimental, in a way. It just didn't work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So I stopped painting. I drew and I drew and I drew, and I drew for approximately two years, and I didn't do anything else. Then—and I didn't need to because I wasn't going to show at Myers anymore, and I eventually left him about a year later.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I was just off to the races with these drawings. And I made a lot. I must have made about 500 in all. They kept changing, and then I started using watercolor, and I switched to Cray-Pas rather than Crayola crayons. Then I made—one of the summers in the Hamptons I made a group of cut-outs like that one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. What is that? Is it paper and canvas?

VICTORIA BARR: That's rad board painted in acrylic and canvas. And I have various other ones around. They were quite successful. I was very pleased with them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also got away from the standard shape, too.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. They got away from the background. That's what it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: They looked stronger than the paintings, the stained paintings, where I had tried to paint in the image of a mask-like image, or whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then after that summer, which was the summer of '73, I slipped a disc in my back that winter and I didn't work at all. I was very sick. That put an end to making the cut-outs, which is too bad in a way, because I think I was really onto something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you couldn't work?

VICTORIA BARR: I couldn't work. When I returned to my studio after being in bed for six weeks, I was really not up for too much. I did some more drawing. I did—and they became more, more painted. I gessoed the paper and I used oil paint and oil crayon, and they became more and more painterly. But they had that separation because there was always the white paper, and then there was a drawing on top of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Now, what I'm leading up to is that I seem to have, as I look at it in retrospect, been more and more involved with the separation of each element in the painting. So, anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Meaning what, in that way?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I will tell you. I'll tell you in a minute. But what I've tried to do—I got myself literally back on my feet the spring of '74 and went to Long Island again and made some paintings where I painted first the background of the painting a kind of no-color beigey-gray. Then I let it dry completely. And then on top of that, I made this time very, very formal, very abstract paintings of spirits or demons.

When I came back from Bali, I started working again, and I started to use some of the old paintings that I had from the stained-painting period, onto which I tacked some of the cardboard cut-outs like that one there, like [Inaudible.].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Or like [Inaudible.] around the corner here. This painting over here is—those two square, small square spirals, I made in 1974. The background, I made in 1969, but I put the whole thing together in 1976 so that I was putting one thing on top of the other, leaving each element discretely separate. So there would be no—you know, like no kind of integration of one element with another, except simply the way I placed it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: And I think that that ties up with the terraced landscape, you know. In a sense also, it's like the filmstrip paintings, the sequential filmstrip paintings that I did. Instead of going from top to bottom, came now from back to front or from front to back. It's just as I changed the direction of the way I was working, but was still preoccupied with the same kind of painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I saw some things in Bali. Like for instance, the wayang kulit shadow puppet plays might also have influenced me to do this. Because there they have a screen and they use the shadow puppets. But the shadow puppets are separate. You know, they're never attached in any way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That idea of layered separate space. Also theater—you know, the whole proscenium theater, you know, where you have various drops that come down and everything. And you have people that move back and forth on that stage. I think that's what sunk in, one of the things that sunk in while I was there.

Being in terraced landscape is a very strange—in rice fields is a very strange experience because when—at certain times of year when the rice is growing, it's growing in water. And you see this natural landscape all divided up in a rather—you know, it's like organic forms divided inorganically some of the time. In the hills, it's very organic, but on flat it's not. It's squared off and everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So it's square patterns on organic forms. And then there was water in it, so there are reflections, also. You see the reflections of the sky.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the water, with the green, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah. With the rice growing up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I know this did it for me. Even the push pins in the sense are like rice, you know, just little elements with much greater possibilities for expanding landscape. But sort of concrete landscape of the rice, like the borders of the terraces, which are like the pathways that you can walk along. Then the sort of dreamlike reflections of the clouds and the sky and the sort of brightness. You see the sun. You see the sun and the moon reflected in the water.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You see in top of you by looking down.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes. That's good. It's amazing. It's beautiful, just beautiful. And it's good for the mind, good for my mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

VICTORIA BARR: Oh, it's very contemplative. It's very peaceful, very ordered.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you get interested in contemplation then?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, that happened to me when I came back from India. My friends Michael and Sarah Jane had thought that they might visit an ashram. They were not planning to—they weren't looking for a master or anything like that. They are the first people who showed me any books about Tantric painting, the two big books put out by the Kumar brothers, though that's mostly—that's all Hindu Tantric, or mostly all Hindu Tantric.

When I came back from—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: Most of it, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are Jane's.

VICTORIA BARR: They are Jane's, yes. But they had a Hindu Tantric master teach them privately. They were very unconventional in that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

VICTORIA BARR: And—now, those are people that we saw when we were in Delhi. We met several of them. There are seven in all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I saw one the other night somewhere.

VICTORIA BARR: You saw one at the Whitney. You saw Naveen [ph], didn't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, right.

VICTORIA BARR: Right. Anyhow, when I came back with all this rage that I had, it was really bad. I mean, it was really a bad time, that summer in Provincetown. I really didn't know what to do with myself. I mean, I was really upset by many, many things. I had a friend called Patty Patmode [ph], and she had a great friend called Anthony Simmons [ph] who came to visit her in Provincetown, and who told her how to do transcendental meditation. I liked him. I liked the sort of feeling that he had about him.

I felt that I needed to do something to try and kind of quiet myself down a little bit and relieve some of this internal pressure that I had. And I mean, I can't say that I wasn't oblivious to—I mean, when we were in India, we saw saddams [ph] all the time wandering around. And although we were there, the climate of this country was still extremely political. It had not—you know, people did not talk about anything particularly spiritual at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean in America?

VICTORIA BARR: In America.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Oh, really?

VICTORIA BARR: No. It was not—in 1972 was when—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Different circles, different conversations.

VICTORIA BARR: Different conversations, exactly. But with me, it was still Cambodia, Kent State, and women's movement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I had very political friends and, you know, this was just something that I did not feel free to talk about. I came back from Provincetown and decided to learn TM, which I did on my own.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did it work that way?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I mean, I did it on my own meaning that I didn't do it with Patty and Anthony, because I had to come back to New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, you have to be taught over a period of time and there wasn't enough time. So I went to the center here in New York and took the first course. And at the same time, I was very friendly with Susan Hall. I just want to tell you a brief story about our one meeting that we had. I was friendly with her, but I didn't know her terribly well at that time.

Marcia Tucker had a party in the fall of '72. I had just finished the course of TM, telling nobody. I was so tired of being criticized. After all, I was born into the establishment. I was, for all intents and purposes, a WASP, although I'm not technically a WASP, which was not an easy time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean "not technically"?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, not technically because I'm Celtic and Italian. I'm not Anglo-Saxon.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA BARR: But, I mean, I am—I mean, I am a WASP.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: So I wasn't going to tell a soul. And there was Marcia's party. We're all having a very good time and I saw Susan, who had been in Italy. I was very curious about this, because I felt that maybe she had had an exhibition in Milan or Turin. And I said to her, you know, "What have you been doing in Italy?" Of course I was interested because I knew Italy very well. She came up to me, and she said—she looked at me. I remember this as if it were yesterday. She looked at me, and she said, "I'm going to tell you a secret," and she literally, you know, turned my head around, and just like a kid, you know—"I'll tell you a secret. I was in Italy doing an instructor's course in transcendental meditation." She had no idea that I was interested. And I looked at her, and I said, "I just finished the preliminary course." She threw her arms around me, and we swore that we wouldn't talk to anybody at the party about it.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I was really, really clandestine at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: Then very soon afterwards the climate began to change. And now, of course, people speak about it like they speak about anything else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Anything else.

VICTORIA BARR: It's chic for some and serious for others.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can't be both.

VICTORIA BARR: Tried not to be, tried not to be.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: I don't talk about it very much, myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But where did John Giorno come in?

VICTORIA BARR: Okay. John Giorno came in this way. Somewhere along the line I went to hear him read his poetry at Holly Solomon's, 198 Greene Street.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

VICTORIA BARR: That is where I had first met Susan Hall. She was having a show there, beautiful paintings. She was newly in from California. I was supposed to have a show there also of my drawings. This was a little bit later. And they closed their loft instead. So the show was cancelled, which was really sad because I had really looked forward to showing with them very much.

But anyhow, John read there. He read with another person. And they had two tapes going on at the same time. So there were really four people reading, two live people and two tapes. I was struck by it and I met him. Another thing that happened, which was before I went to India, I did not know anything about him. I did not know that he was a Buddhist. He might not have been at that time. But when I came back—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe he was beginning then.

VICTORIA BARR: He was beginning, I think. I really don't know. I didn't know anything about him. I was just struck by this performance. So I had—when I came back from India, there was an opening at the Whitney, in which I wore a Tibetan costume that I had bought while I was in India. I came out of the elevator, looked across the room, and there was John, and he had on a Tibetan shirt. Well, of course, there was instant recognition. And I didn't know anybody that had been in India. My friends Michael and Sarah Jane were still there. They stayed on. So, you know, I went up to him, and I said, "I've just come back from India. What are you doing in that shirt?" and, you know, something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: Then Patty Oldenburg, who lived upstairs, was a wonderful party giver. At that time she was giving parties where she would invite a lot of poets and John showed up there. I began to find out a little bit more about him.

Eventually what happened with transcendental meditation was that I kept on doing it. And I decided that I wanted to do something else, did not wish to continue with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, first of all, I didn't really like the Maharishi. When I did it, I was not—I did not want to learn very much about Eastern philosophy. I just wanted something that was practical. I thought that it was a good thing for a Western person to do, which indeed it was. I still think it's good to do. And it's perfectly possible to take the course and do it, and do it forever, if you want. It's 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes at night, and that's it.

But I was sort of looking around for new people. I did not like the TM retreat weekends. I now look back in retrospect and I think that I misjudged them. But that's in retrospect.

So anyway, to make a long story short, I called up John one day, and I asked him about what it was that he was doing. He told me that he had been studying with a Tibetan called Chögyam Trungpa who is based in Boulder—inconveniently based in Boulder, although at one time he was here in New York. And I think that John did most of his studying with him here in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Here. Yes.

VICTORIA BARR: I went over to Dharmadhatu, which is their center here in New York and learnt very easily the basics of Shambhala meditation, which is sort of one of the first kinds of meditation you can do if you are interested in practicing Buddhism the way the Tibetans do. And I had been attracted to the Tibetans through Michael and Sarah Jane originally, then through John.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I did do a course with Chögyam Trungpa. He came to New York. And it was extremely interesting. I did not like him. He's an alcoholic. I felt—I judged him on that, among other things. I think he's a good teacher for some people; I knew he was not for me. And I learnt a lot, though, and I took several very short courses at Dharmadhatu. Then I began to hear from John that he was trying to bring over a Tibetan master that he studied with in Darjeeling, whose name was Duchong Repichang [ph], His Holiness Duchong Repichang.

So, anyway, Duchong was brought over by John Giorno [Inaudible.], and I would assume with a lot of help and a lot of coordination, last year. That means 1976. And he taught a seminar last summer, which I took, in which I took vows of refuge. I had been doing Shambhala and the [Inaudible.] of meditation for about a year before I took the vows of refuge, which are the first—you can take them either initially, without having done any kind of meditation at all, or you can take them in a way whereby you are deciding to become Buddhist. I did it in the second way.

So I virtually became Buddhist last summer. When I went to Bali—on both trips I also went to Java, where I went to look at [Inaudible.], you know, the great Buddhist stupa outside of [Inaudible.]. So anyway, the practice that I do now is the basic practice which includes the passion of meditation, that includes the recitation of something called the Nundrug [ph], which is a variety of short—what we would call prayers, really. They are prayers and mantras interwoven. Also several visualizations, where you visualize various teachers who are in the Tibetan pantheon. He's the most important one in the Mundro [ph] which Duchong uses.

I'm studying with somebody who is Duchong's son, whose name is [Inaudible.] and who has been here in New York all winter. So I see him about once every week and ask him questions and study with him privately.

John has opened a center very recently. So things are sort of getting underway. And we're hoping that Duchong will come back, but it's hard to know because he's old and he's not terribly well. He has many people in Darjeeling, many holy Tibetans in Darjeeling who are studying with him. It would mean that it would be very complicated for him to suddenly come and live here. And I don't know whether he will or not. But that's basically that story.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It would be difficult for him to be here and there and back and forth.

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, it is very difficult. Yeah, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. Do you find this has changed your relationship to the world a lot?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah, I do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Easier in New York? More difficult? Or can you tell?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, I did it—I did it because I wanted it to be easier. And in some ways it is, and in some ways it isn't. It's changed—it's changed me quite a lot. I do a lot less running around now than I used to. It's gotten me out gradually—what I am doing is, I am leaving Christianity.

[They Laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, which you said.

VICTORIA BARR: Which I wanted to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, there seemed to be a lot of—I would say a lot of religious conflict and confusion in my family, which I didn't understand as I was a child and growing up. I mean, it was just there. You know what I mean? And I never understood. I mean, I think, you know—I mean, I say that I'm Buddhist. I think I will be Christian in certain ways also, without knowing it, and certainly without practicing it. I mean, one of the things I could never stand was, I hated going to church. Just so bored.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: I saw—of course, I had opportunities to see stories from the New Testament, particularly, in the Italian art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I didn't understand them. I went to Sunday School when I was a child; it was a disaster. They gave us these Bibles that had horrible reproductions of great Tintoretos that my parents thought were just appalling.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: These things we had to color in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, dear. Oh, dear.

VICTORIA BARR: Joseph and his coat of many colors—it was horrible. My father took one look at that.

[They Laugh.]

VICTORIA BARR: There was a lot of complications because my grandfather—that's my father's father—was a Presbyterian minister. My father never went to church except when he drove his mother to church in Vermont in the summertime.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: My mother was Church of England because her mother was Irish, an Irish Protestant, but brought up basically in a Catholic society in Rome. It was just too complicated. And I don't know. I think these were things that were never discussed and never resolved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But were still very apparent and rather important.

VICTORIA BARR: Very, very apparent and obviously, in some way, extremely important. I think that what—I felt also—I tell you one reason that I did this, was that I'd been around a lot of successful people all my life. I've been around a lot of successful unhappy people and I felt that there must be something else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you been around any happy ones who were successful?

VICTORIA BARR: Not too many, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: True.

VICTORIA BARR: Not too many. But I felt that I—I mean, again, this is part of the sort of—either it's part of the process of change and part of the process of acceptance. I mean, it's both, right?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

VICTORIA BARR: I mean, I do feel that what I'm interested in is changing my perceptions of the world, not seeking Nirvana as something, you know, distant and, you know, that kind of thing. You know, I'm very interested in simply altering my vision of the world, altering my attitudes about the world and getting away from Christianity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think this is reflected in your work?

VICTORIA BARR: Yes, very much so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, besides just the sort of words and certain colors and images?

VICTORIA BARR: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean in the process or the ideas behind it?

VICTORIA BARR: Well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or do you think it's just now beginning to become apparent?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, the more—you know, the more I understand, the more I consciously understand what I'm doing—I mean, the whole thing of everything being separate is one of the basic tenets of Buddhism, is that each thing must be seen and viewed separately. I mean, that's—in a sense what that is is it's a nonattachment. And I think that that has—you know, that has been a preoccupation of mine for a long, long time that things are not stuck together, you know, that everything can be viewed intrinsically as something in itself. Or each person is somebody in themselves. You know, it's very complicated to talk about intelligently.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

VICTORIA BARR: It is, in a sense—I mean, I have felt that I see things now with greater clarity than I ever did before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In terms of what?

VICTORIA BARR: Well, everything. You know, the way the world looks. My perceptions of the world have changed. That—I really—it's hard for me to talk about this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

[END REEL 6 SIDE B.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]